THE

SCOTTISH CHIEFS,

A ROMANCE.

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

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There comes a voice that awakes my soul. It is the voice of years that are gone; they roll before me with all their deeds.
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SCOTTISH CHIEFS.

CHAP. I.

THE day after the departure of Helen, Wallace, to indulge the impatience of his royal companion, set forth to meet the returning steps of Ruthven with his gathered legions. Having passed along the romantic borders of Invermay, the friends descended towards the precipitous banks of the Earn at the foot of the Grampians, and wound amongst their green labyrinths, till Bruce, who had never before been in such mountainous wilds, exclaimed, that they must have wandered far from any human track. "The way is familiar to

me," returned Wallace, who had often trodden it, "as the garden of Hunting tower."

The day, which had been cloudy, suddenly turned to wind and rain; and certainly spread an air of desolation over the scene, very dreary to an eye, which, from infancy had been accustomed to the fertile plains of the ever-cheerful south. The whole of the road was rough, dangerous, and dreadful. The steep and black rocks towering above their heads, seemed to threaten the precipitation of their impending masses, into the path below. But Wallace had told Bruce they were in the right track; and he gaily breasted, both the storm, and the perils of the road. They ascended a mountain, whose enormous piles of granite, torn by many a winter tempest, projected their barren summits, from a surface of moor-land, on which lay a deep incrustation of snow.—The blast now blew a tempest; and the rain and sleet beat so hard, that Bruce,

laughing, declared he believed the witches of his country were in league with Edward; and hid in shrouds of mist, were all assembled here, to drive their lawful prince into the roaring cataracts beneath.

Thus, with torrents of water pouring down the sides of their armour, did the friends, envelopped in a sea of vapours, descend the western brow of this part of the Grampians, until they approached Loch Earn. They had hardly arrived there, before the rain ceased, and the clouds, rolling away from the sides of the mountains, discovered the vast and precipitous Ben Vorlich. Its base was covered with huge stones, scattered in fragments, like the wreck of some rocky world, and spread abroad, in wide and horrid desolation. The mountain itself, the highest in this chain of the Grampians, was, in every part, marked by deep and black ravines, made by the rushing waters in the time of floods; but where its blue head mingled with the clouds, a stream of

brightness issued, that seemed to promise the dispersion of its vapours; and consequently, a more secure path for Wallace to lead his friend over its perilous heights.

This appearance did not deceive.—The whole mantle of clouds, with which the tops of all the mountains had been obscured, rolled away towards the west, and discovered to the eye of Wallace, that this line of light which he had discerned through the mist, was the host of Ruthven descending Ben Vorlich in defiles. From the nature of the path, they were obliged to move in a winding direction; and as the sun now shone full upon their arms, and their lengthened lines gradually extended from the summit of the mountain to its base, no sight could contain more of the sublime; none of truer grandeur, to the enraptured mind of Bruce. He forgot his horror of the wastes he had passed over, in the joy of beholding so noble an army of his countrymen, thus approaching, to place him upon the throne of his

ancestors. "Wallace," cried he, "these brave hearts deserve a more cheerful home! My sceptre must turn this *Scotia deserta* into *Scotia felix*, and so shall I reward the service they this day bring me."

"They are happy in these wilds," returned Wallace:—"their flocks browse on the hills, their herds in the vallies. The soil yields sufficient increase to support its sons; and their greatest luxuries are a minstrel's song and the lip of their brides. Their ambition is satisfied with following their chief to the field; and their honour lies in serving their God, and maintaining the freedom of their country. Beware, then, my dear prince, of changing the simple habits of those virtuous mountaineers. Introduce the luxurious cultivation of France into these tracts, you will infect them with artificial wants; and with every want, you put a link to a chain which will fasten them in bondage whenever a tyrant chuses to grasp it. Leave them then their rocks as you find

them; and you will ever have a hardy race, ready to perish in their defence, or to meet death for the royal guardian of their liberties."

Lord Ruthven no sooner reached the banks of Loch Earn, than he espied the prince and Wallace.—He joined them; and marshalling his men in a wide tract of land at the head of that vast body of water, placed himself, with the two supposed De Longuevilles, in the van; and in this array, marched through the vallies of Strathmore and Strathallan, into Stirlingshire. The young Earl of Fyfe held the government of the castle and town of Stirling; and as he had been a warm supporter of the late Lord Badenoch, the violent enemy of Wallace, Bruce negatived Ruthven's proposal, to send in a messenger for the earl's division of troops: "No, my lord," said he, "like my friend Wallace, I will have no luke-warm hearts near me; all must be earnest in my cause, or entirely out of the contest.—I am

content with the brave men I see around me."

After rapid marches and short haltings, they arrived safe, and without impediment, at Linlithgow, where Wallace proposed staying a night to refresh the troops, which were now joined by Sir Alexander Ramsay at the head of a thousand of his clan. While the men took rest, their chiefs waked to think for them. And Wallace, with Bruce and Ruthven, and the brave Ramsay, (to whom Wallace had revealed himself, but still kept Bruce unknown) were in deep consultation, when Grimsby entered, to inform his master, that a young knight desired to speak with Sir Guy de Longueville. "What is his name?" demanded Wallace. "He refused to tell it," replied Grimsby. "He is splendidly armed; but as he wears his beaver shut, it is impossible for me to say any thing of his countenance." Wallace looked around with a glance, that inquired, whether the stranger should be admitted.

"Certainly," said Bruce; "but first put on your mask." Wallace closed his visor; and the moment after, Grimsby re-entered with a knight of elegant mien, habited in a suit of green armour studded with gold. He wore a close helmet, from which streamed a long feather of the same hue. Wallace rose at his entrance; the stranger advanced to him. "You are he whom I seek.—I am a Scot, and a man of few words. Accept my services; allow me to attend you in this war, never to be separated from your side, and I will serve you faithfully." Wallace replied, "And who is the brave knight, to whom Sir Guy de Longueville will owe so great an obligation." "My name," answered the stranger, "shall not be revealed, till he who now wears that of the Reaver whom he slew, proclaims his own in the day of victory.—I know you, sir; but your secret is as safe with me, as in your own breast. Allow me to fight by your side, and I am yours for ever."

Wallace was surprised, but not confounded, by this speech. "I have only one question to ask you, noble stranger," replied he, "before I confide any part of a cause, dearer to me than life, in your integrity. How did you become master of a secret, which I believed out of the power of even treachery to betray?"—"No one betrayed your secret to me.—I came by my information in an honourable manner; but the means, I shall never reveal, till I see the time to declare my name; and that perhaps may be in the moment when the assumed brother of that young Frenchman," added the stranger, turning to Bruce, "again appears publicly in Scotland, as Sir William Wallace."

"I am satisfied;" replied he; well-pleased that, whoever this knight might be, Bruce yet remained undiscovered; "I grant your request.—This brave youth, whose name I share, forgives me the success of my sword; I slew the Red Reaver,

and therefore make myself a brother to Thomas de Longueville. He fights on my right hand.—You shall be stationed at my left." "At the side next your heart, noble chief!" exclaimed the stranger; "let that ever be my post, there to guard the bulwark of Scotland, the life of the bravest of men."

This enthusiasm did not surprise any present; it was the usual language of all who approached Sir William Wallace: and Bruce, particularly pleased with the heart-felt energy with which it was uttered, forgot his disguise in the amiable fervour of approbation, and half-rose to welcome him to his cause; but a look from Wallace, (who, on being known, had uncovered his face,) arrested his intention; and the prince sat down again, thankful for so timely a check on his precipitancy.

In crossing the Pentland hills, next day, into Mid-Lothian, they were met by Edwin, who had crossed from the north

by the frith of Forth; and having heard no tidings of the Scottish army in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh, had turned, to meet it on the road he knew it must take. Wallace introduced him to the Knight of the Green Plume: for that was the appellation by which the stranger desired to be known:—and then made inquiries after the manner of Lady Helen's bearing the fatigues of her journey to Mar. "Pretty well there," said he, "but much better back again."—He then explained, that on his arrival with Helen at Braemar, neither Lady Mar nor his mother would consent to remain so far from the spot where Wallace was again to contend for the safety of their country. Helen did not say any thing in opposition to their wishes; and at last Edwin yielded to the entreaties of Lady Mar; and to the tears of his mother, anxious for her husband; to bring them where they might, at least not long endure the misery of suspense. Having

once consented, without an hour's delay, he set forth with the ladies to re-trace his steps to Hunting tower; and there he left them under a guard of three hundred men, whom he brought from Mar for that purpose.

Wallace much regretted the additional fatigue which the tender frame of Lady Helen had thus been compelled to undergo; but as Edwin had provided for the security of Hunting tower, he was reconciled to her being so much the nearer intelligence from the army. Bruce, whose real name had not been revealed to the other ladies of Ruthven's family, in a lowered voice asked Edwin some questions relative to the spirits in which Helen had parted with him. "In losing her," added he, "my friend and I feel but as part of what we were.—Her presence seemed to ameliorate the fierceness of our war-councils; and ever reminded me of the angelic guard by whom Heaven points our way." "I left her

with looks like the angel you speak of:" answered Edwin: " she bade me farewel upon the platform of the eastern tower of the castle. When I gave her the parting embrace, she raised herself from my breast, and stretching her arms to heaven, while her pure soul shone in her eyes, exclaimed, " Bless him, gracious God; bless him and his noble commander: may they ever, with the prince they love, be thine especial care!" I knelt by her, as she uttered this; and touching the hem of her garments, as some holy thing, hurried from the spot." " Her prayers," cried Bruce, " will fight for us.—They are arms well befitting the virgins of Scotland to use against its foes."—" And without such unction," rejoined Wallace, " the warrior may draw his steel in vain."

The stranger knight, the moment after his introduction to Edwin, had engaged himself in conversation with Ramsay. But Lord Ruthven, having satisfied him-

self with regard to the safety of the fair inhabitants of Hunting tower, interrupted the discourse, by asking Ramsay some questions relative to the military positions on the banks of either Eske. Sir Alexander, being the grandson of the Lord of Roslyn, and having passed his youth in its neighbourhood, was well qualified to answer these questions. Wallace drew towards the discussion; and Bruce and Edwin following his example; in such discourse they marched along, till, passing before the lofty ridge of the Corstorphine hills, they were met by groups of peasantry, flying, as if from an enemy. At sight of the Scottish banners they stopped, and informed their armed countrymen, that the new Regent, John of Badenoch, had, in opposition to the advice of Sir Simon Fraser, attacked the Southron army on its vantage ground near Borthwick castle, and was consequently beaten. His shattered troops had fallen back towards Edinburgh; hoping

to cross the Forth, and elude their pursuers, while the country people, dismayed, fled before them on all sides. The reporters of this intelligence, peasants from Hawthorndean, magnified the number of the enemy to an incredible amount.

Wallace knew how much to believe; but determining, whether great or small the power of his adversary, to intercept him at Roslyn, he sent to Cummin and to Fraser to rendezvous on the banks of the Eske. The brave troops which he led, ignorant of their real commander, obeyed his directions, under a belief that they were Lord Ruthven's, who was their ostensible leader. As they passed along, every village and solitary cot seemed recently deserted; and through an awful solitude they took their rapid way, till the towers of Roslyn castle hailed them as a beacon, from amidst the wooded heights of the northern Eske. "There," cried Ramsay, pointing to the embattled

rock, "stands the fortress of my forefathers! It shall this day be made famous, by the actions performed before its walls!"

Wallace, whose knowledge of this part of the country was not quite so familiar as that of Ramsay, had learnt sufficient from him, to decide at once which would be the most favourable position, for a small and resolute band to assume against a large and conquering army; and accordingly disposing his troops, which did not amount to more than eight thousand, he dispatched a thousand men, under the command of Ramsay, to occupy the numerous caves in the southern banks of the Eske; whence he was to issue in various divisions, and with shouts, on the first appearance of advantage, either on his side, or on the enemy's.[a]

Ruthven, meanwhile, went for a few minutes into the castle, to embrace his niece; and to assure the venerable Lord of Roslyn, then almost a prisoner within

his walls, of the determination of the commanders, his coadjutors, to drive the Southrons again beyond the borders, or themselves to perish beneath the waters of the Eske.

Edwin, who with Grimsby had volunteered the dangerous service of reconnoitring the enemy, returned in an hour, bringing in a straggler from the English camp. When they seized him, Edwin promised him his life, on condition that he should tell them the strength of the advancing army. The terrified wretch did not hesitate; and from him they learnt, that it was commanded by Sir John Segrave, and Ralph Confrey; who, deeming the country entirely subdued by the issue of the two last battles with the black and red Cummins, ([b]) were laying schemes for a general plundering: and to sweep the land at once, Segrave had divided his army into three divisions, which, on their arrival at some certain spot, were to separate, and scatter themselves over

the country to gather in the spoil. To be assured of this information being the truth, while Grimsby remained to guard the prisoner, Edwin went alone into the path he was told the Southrons were approaching; and from a height he discerned about ten thousand of them winding along the valley. With this confirmation of the man's account, he brought him to the Scottish lines; and Wallace, who well knew how to reap advantage from the errors of his enemies, being joined by Fraser and the discomfited Regent, made the concerted signal to Ruthven. ——That nobleman immediately pointed out to his men, the waving colours of the Southrons, as they approached beneath the over-hanging woods of Hawthorndean. He exhorted them, by their fathers, wives, and children, to breast the enemy at this spot; to grapple with him till he fell.—" Scotland," cried he, " is lost, or won, this day.—You are freemen, or slaves; your families are your

own, or the property of tyrants!—Fight stoutly, and God will yield you an invisible support."

The Scots answered their general by a shout, and calling on him to lead them forward, Ruthven placed himself with the Regent and Fraser in the van, and led the charge. The Southrons, little expecting an assault from an adversary they had so lately driven off the field, were taken by surprise, but they fought well; and resolutely stood their ground; till Wallace and Bruce, who commanded the flanking divisions, closed in upon them with an impetuosity that drove Confrey into the river, an arrow from Sir Alexander Ramsay, finished his career, and threw him a breathless corse amongst the plunging feet of his drowning squadrons. As the ambuscade of Ramsay poured from his caves, the earth seemed teeming with mailed warriors; and the Southrons, seeing the surrounding heights, and the deep defiles filled with the same terrific

appearances, gave way on all sides, and fled with precipitation towards their second division, which lay a few miles southward. Thither, the conquering squadrons of the Scots followed them. The fugitives leaping the trenches of the encampment, called aloud to their comrades, "Arm! arm! hell is in league against us!"——Segrave, was in a moment at the head of his legions; and a battle more desperate than the first, blazed over the field.—The flying troops of Confrey, rallying around the standard of their general in chief, fought with the spirit of revenge; and being now a body of nearly twenty thousand men, against eight thousand Scots, the conflict became tremendous. In several points, the Southrons gained so greatly the advantage, that Wallace and Bruce, leaving their respective stations to Edwin and the green knight, threw themselves successively into those parts where the enemy seemed to prevail; and by exhortati-

ons, example and prowess, a thousand times turned the fate of the day, and appeared as they shot from rank to rank, to be two comets of fire sent before the Scottish troops to consume all who opposed them. Segrave was taken, and forty brave English knights besides. The green surface of the ground was dyed red with Southron blood, and the men were on all sides calling for quarter;—when the cry of "Havoc and St. George!" issued from the adjoining hill. At the same moment, a band of Mid-Lothianers, (who, for the sake of plunder, had stolen into that part of the deserted English camp, which occupied the rear of the height, seeing the advancing troops of a third division of the enemy,) like guilty cowards, rushed down amongst their comrades, echoing the war cry of England, and exclaiming, "We are lost; a host, reaching to the horizon, is just upon us!"—Terror struck to almost every Scottish heart. The Southrons

who lately cried for mercy leaped upon their feet. The fight recommenced with redoubled fury. Sir Robert Neville, at the head of the new reinforcement, charged into the centre of the Scottish legions. The rescue of Segrave was his object. Bruce and Edwin threw themselves into the breach which his impetuous valour had made in that part of their line, and fighting man to man, would have taken Neville also, had not a follower of that nobleman, wielding a ponderous mace, struck Bruce so terrible a blow as to fracture his helmet, and cast him from his horse to the ground. The fall of so active a leader, excited as much dismay in the surrounding Scots, as it encouraged the reviving spirits of the enemy. Edwin's only hope, was now to preserve his prince from being trampled on; and while he fought to that purpose, and afterwards sent the senseless body off the field to Roslyn castle, Neville retook Segrave and his

knights. Lord Ruthven now contended with a feeble arm. Fatigued with the two preceding conflicts, covered with wounds, and perceiving indeed a host pouring upon them on all sides, (for the whole of Segrave's original army of thirty thousand men, excepting those who had fallen in the preceding engagements, were now collected to the assault;) the Scots exhausted, and in despair, gave ground; and some throwing away their arms, to fly the more unencumbered, spread the confusion; and by exposing themselves panic-struck to the swords of their enemies, occasioned so general a havoc, that the day must have ended in the universal destruction of every Scot in the field, had not Wallace perceived the crisis, and that as Guy de Longueville, he shed his blood in vain. In vain, his terrified countrymen saw him rush into the thickest of the carnage: in vain, he called to them, by all that was sacred to man, to stand to the

last. He was a foreigner, and they had no confidence in his exhortations; death was before them, and they turned to fly. The fate of his country hung on an instant. The last rays of the setting sun, shone full on the rocky promontory of the hill which projected over the field of combat. He took his resolution, and spurring his steed up the steep ascent, stood on the summit where he would be seen by the whole army, and taking off his helmet; waved it in the air with a shout; and having drawn all eyes upon him, suddenly exclaimed—"Scots! you have this day vanquished the Southrons twice! If you be men, remember Cambus-Kenneth, and follow William Wallace to a third victory!" The cry which issued from the amazed troops, was that of a people who beheld the angel of their deliverance. "Wallace," was the charge-word of every heart. The hero's courage seemed instantaneously diffused through every

breast; and with braced arms, and determined spirits, forming at once into the phalanx his thundering voice dictated,—the Southrons again felt the weight of the Scottish steel; and a battle ensued, which made the bright Eske run purple to the sea, and covered the pastoral glades of Hawthorndean with the bodies of its invaders.

Sir John Segrave and Neville were both taken. And ere night closed in upon the carnage, Wallace granted quarter to those who sued for it; and receiving their arms, left them to repose in their before depopulated camp.(c)

CHAP. II.

WALLACE, having planted Fraser and Ramsay, with an adequate force, in charge

of the prisoners; went to the two Southron commanders, to pay them the courtesy he thought due to their bravery and rank, before he retired with his victorious followers towards Roslyn castle. He entered their tent alone; at sight of the warrior, who had given them so signal a defeat, the generals rose. Neville, who had received a slight wound in one of his arms, stretched out the other to Wallace, in answer to a compliment which that chieftain paid to his military conduct. "Sir William Wallace," said he, "that you were obliged to declare a name so deservedly renowned, before the troops I led, could be made to relinquish one step of their hard-earned advantage, was an acknowledgment in their favour almost equivalent to a victory."

Sir John Segrave, who stood leaning on his sword with a disturbed countenance, interrupted him: "The fate of this day, cannot be attributed to any earthly name, or hand. I believe my sovereign

will allow the zeal with which I have ever served him; and yet thirty thousand, as brave men as ever crossed the marches, have fallen before a handful of Scots. Three victories won over Edward's troops in one day, are not events of a common nature. God alone has been our vanquisher." "I acknowledge it;" cried Wallace; "and that he is on the side of justice, let the return of St. Matthias's day ever remind your countrymen!"

Segrave, when he gave the victory to the Lord of Hosts, did it more from jealousy of what might be Edward's opinion of his conduct, when compared with Neville's, than from any intention to imply that the cause of Scotland was justly Heaven-defended. Such are the impious inconsistencies of unprincipled men! He frowned at the reply of Wallace, and turned gloomily away. Neville returned a respectful answer; and their conqueror soon after left them.

Edwin, with the Knight of the Green Plume, who had indeed approved his valour by many a brave deed performed at his commander's side, awaited his return from the tent. Ruthven came up with Wallace, before he joined them; and told him, that Bruce was safe under the care of the sage of Ercildown; and that the Regent, who had been wounded in the beginning of the day, was also in Roslyn castle. Wallace then called Edwin to him, and all other of the survivors who had suffered in these three desperate battles, were collected from amongst the slain, and carried by his orders into the neighbouring castles of Hawthorndean, Brunston, and Dalkeith. The rest of the soldiers were commanded to repose on their arms. These duties performed, Wallace thought of satisfying the anxieties of friendship, and loyalty, and of going to see how Bruce fared.

The moon shone brightly as his party

rode forward. The river rushing along its shelving bed, glittered in her beams; and pouring over the shattered fragments of many a time-precipitated cliff, fled in hoarse murmurs from the perpendicular sides of the blood-stained heights which imprisoned its struggling waters. Wallace ascended the steep acclivity on which Roslyn castle stands; in crossing the draw-bridge, which divides its rocky peninsula from the main land, he looked around and sighed. The scene reminded him of Ellerslie. A deep shadow lay on the woods beneath; and the pensile branches of the now leafless trees, bending to meet the flood, seemed mourning the deaths which now polluted its stream. The water lay in profound repose at the base of these beautiful craigs, as if peace longed to become an inhabitant of so lovely a scene.

At the gate of the castle its aged master, the Lord Sinclair, met Wallace to bid him welcome. "Blessed be the saint

of this day," exclaimed he, "for thus bringing our best defender, even as by a miracle, to snatch us as a brand from the fire! My gates, like my heart, open to receive the true Regent of Scotland." "I have only done a Scotsman's duty, venerable Sinclair," replied Wallace, "and must not arrogate a title, which Heaven has transferred to other hands." "Not Heaven, but the envious man;" replied the old chieftain. "It was rebellion against the supreme wish of the nation, that invested the black Cummin with the regency; and some similar infatuation has bestowed the same title on his brother. What did he not lose till you, Scotland's true champion, re-appeared, to rescue her again from slavery?" "The present Lord Badenoch is an honest, and a brave man;" replied Wallace; "and as I obey the power which gave him his authority, I am ready, by fidelity to him, to serve Scotland with as vigorous a zeal as ever; so, noble Sinclair, when our ru-

lers cast not trammels on our virtue, let us obey them as the vicegerents of Heaven."

Wallace then asked to be conducted to his wounded friend Sir Thomas de Longueville, (for Sinclair was ignorant of the real rank of his guest;) and his rejoicing host, eager to oblige him, immediately led the way through a gallery; and opening the door of an apartment, discovered Bruce lying on a couch, and an old man, whose silver beard and sweeping robes announced him to be the sage of Ercildown, bathing his head with balsams. A young creature, beautiful as the creation of genius, hung over the prostrate chief. She held a golden casket in her hand, out of which the sage drew the unctions he applied. At the sound of Wallace's voice, who spoke in a low tone to Ruthven as he entered the chamber, the wounded prince started on his arm, and stretched out his hand to his friend; —but, he as instantly fell back. Wallace

hastened forward in an agony of fear, that perhaps Bruce was in greater danger than he had been told. Bruce recovered a little from the swoon, into which the suddenness of his attempt to rise had thrown him. Feeling a hand grasping his, he guessed to whom it belonged, and gently pressing it, smiled; and in a moment afterwards opening his eyes, in a low voice articulated—"My dear Wallace! you are victorious?" "Completely so, my prince and king," returned he in the same tone; "all is now plain before you; speak but the word, and render Scotland happy!" "Not yet; O! not yet," whispered he. "My more than brother, allow Bruce to be himself again, before he is known in the land of his fathers! I have but yet begun my probation. Not a Southron must taint our native lands, when my name is proclaimed in Scotland."

Wallace saw that his prince was not in a state to bear argument; and, as all had retired far from the couch when he ap-

proached it; in gratitude for this propriety, (for it had left him and his friend free to converse unobserved,) he turned towards the other inmates of the chamber. The sage advanced to him; and recognising, in his now manly form, the fine youth he had seen with Sir Ronald Crawford at the claiming of the crown; he saluted him with a paternal affection, which tempered the sublime feelings with which he approached the resistless champion of his country: and then beckoning the beautiful girl who had so compassionately hung over the couch of Bruce, she drew near the sage. He took her hand: "Sir William Wallace," said he, "this sweet child is a daughter of the brave Mar, who died in the field of glory on the Carron.—Her grandfather fell a few weeks ago, defending his castle; and I am almost all that is left to her." Isabella, for it was she, covered her face to conceal her emotions. "Dear lady," said Wallace, "these venerable heroes were

both known and beloved by me. And now that Heaven has resumed them to itself, as the last act of friendship that I, perhaps, may be fated to pay their offspring, I shall convey you to a sister, whose matchless heart yearns to receive so dear a consolation."

To disengage Isabella's thoughts from the afflicting remembrances which were bathing her cheeks with tears, Ercildown put a cup of the mingled juice of herbs into her hand, and commissioned her to give it to their invalid. Wallace now learnt that his friend's principal wound was in the head, accompanied by so severe a concussion of the brain, that it would be many days before he could remove from off his bed without danger. Anxious to release him, from even the scarcely-breathed whispers of his martial companions, who stood at some distance from his couch, Wallace immediately proposed leaving him to rest; and beckoning the chieftains, they followed him out of the apartment.

Wallace, next accompanied Sinclair to the apartment of the Regent; and having found him in a fair way of recovery, he passed an hour in the hall, with the Lord of Roslyn; and then bade him and his friends adieu for the night.

On the following morning, he was aroused at day-break, by the abrupt entrance of Andrew Lord Bothwell into his tent. The well-known sounds of his voice, made Wallace start from his pillow, and extend his arms to receive him.—"Murray! my brave, invaluable Murray!" cried he, "thou art welcome, once more, to the side of thy brother in arms. Thee and thine must ever be first in my heart!" The young Lord Bothwell returned his warm embrace in eloquent silence; but sitting down by Wallace's couch, he grasped his hand, and pressing it to his breast, said, "I feel a happiness here, which I have never known since the day of Falkirk. You quitted us, Wallace; and all good, seemed gone with you, or

buried in my father's grave. But you return! you bring conquest and peace with you; you restore our Helen to her family; you bless us with yourself!—And shall you not again see the gay Andrew Murray? It must be so, my friend, melancholy is not my climate; and I shall now live in your beams."——"Dear Murray!" returned Wallace, "this generous enthusiasm can only be equalled by my joy in all that makes you and Scotland happy." He then proceeded to confide to him, all that related to Bruce; and to describe the minutiæ of those plans for his establishment, which had only been hinted in his letters from France. Bothwell entered with ardour into these designs; and regretted, that the difficulty he found in persuading the Lanerkers, to follow him to any field, where they did not expect to find their beloved Wallace, had deprived him of the participation he wished in the late danger, and new glory of his friend. "To compensate for that priva-

tion," replied Wallace, "while our prince is disabled from pursuing victory in his own person, we must not allow our present advantages to lose their expected effects. You shall accompany me through the lowlands, where we must recover the places which the ill-fortune of James Cummin has lost."

Murray gladly embraced this opportunity of again sharing the field with Wallace: and the chiefs joined Bruce. Bothwell was presented to his young sovereign; and Douglas entering, the discourse turned on their different posts of duty. Wallace suggested to his royal friend, that, as his restoration to health could not be so speedy as the cause required, it would be necessary, not to await the event, but begin the recovery of the border counties, before Edward could reinforce their Southron garrisons. Bruce sighed, but with a generous glow suffusing his pale face, said—"Go, my friend! Bless Scotland which way you will; and

let my ready acquiescence, convince future ages that I love my country beyond my own fame: for its sake, I relinquish to you, the whole glory of delivering it out of the hands of the tyrant who has so long usurped my rights. Men may say, when they hear this, that I do not merit the crown you will put upon my head; that I have lain on a couch, while you fought for me: but I will bear all obloquy; rather than deserve its slightest charge, by withholding you an hour from the great work of Scotland's peace."——

"It is not for the breath of men, my dear prince," returned Wallace, "that either you or I act. It is sufficient for us, that we effect their good; and whether the agent be one or the other, the end is the same. Our deeds and intentions have one great judge; and he will award the only true glory."

Such were the principles which filled the hearts of these two friends, worthy of each other, and alike honourable to the country that gave them birth.

Though the wounded John Cummin remained possessed of the title of Regent, Wallace was virtually endowed with the authority. Whatever he suggested, was acted upon as by a decree:—all eyes looked to him, as to the cynosure by which every order of men in Scotland, were to shape their course. The jealousies which had driven him from his former supreme seat, seemed to have died with their prime instigator the late Regent; and no chief of any consequence, excepting Soulis and Athol, who retired in disgust to their castles, breathed a word in opposition to the general gratitude.

Wallace, having dictated his terms, and sent his prisoners to England, commenced the march that was to clear the lowlands of the foe.—His own valiant band, headed by Scrymgeour, rushed towards his standard, with a zeal that rendered each individual a host in himself. The fame of his new victories, seconded by the enthusiasm of the people, and the determination of

his troops, soon made him master of all the fortresses.

Hardly three weeks were consumed in these conquests; and not a rood of land remained, south of the Tay, in the possession of England, excepting Berwick. Before that often disputed strong-hold, Wallace drew up his forces to commence a regular siege: the governor, intimidated by the powerful works which he saw the Scottish chief forming against the town, dispatched a messenger to Edward with the tidings; and to tell him, that if he continued to refuse the peace, for which the Scots fought; and did not immediately send succours to Berwick, he would find it necessary to begin the conquest of the kingdom anew.

CHAP. III.

WHILE Wallace, accompanied by his brave friends, was thus carrying all before him from the Grampian to the Cheviot hills, Bruce was rapidly recovering. His eager wishes seemed to heal his wounds; and on the tenth day after the departure of Wallace, he left that couch which had been beguiled of its irksomeness by the smiling attentions of the tender Isabella. The ensuing sabbath beheld him restored to full vigour; and having imparted his intentions to the lords Ruthven and Douglas, who were both with him, the next morning he joyfully buckled on his armour. Isabella, when she saw him thus clad, started, and the roses left her cheek. "I am armed to be your guide to Hunting tower:" said he, with a look that

shewed he read her thoughts. He then called for pen and ink to write to Wallace. The now re-assured Isabella, rejoicing in the glad beams of his brightening eyes, held the standish. As he dipped his pen, he looked at her with a grateful tenderness that thrilled to her soul; and made her bend her blushing face, to hide emotions, which whispered bliss in every beat of her happy heart. Thus, with a spirit wrapt in felicity; for victory hailed him from without, and love seemed to woo him to the dearest transports within; he wrote the following letter to Wallace:

"I am now well, my best friend! This day I attend my lovely nurse, with her venerable guardian, to Hunting tower. Eastward of Perth, almost every castle of consequence is yet filled by the Southrons, whom, the folly of James Cummin allowed to re-occupy the places whence you had so lately driven them. I go to root them out; to emulate in the north, what

you are now doing in the south! You shall see me again, when the banks of the Spey are as free as you have made the Forth. In all this, I am yet Thomas de Longueville. Isabella, the sweet soother of my hours, knows me as no other; for would she not despise the unfamed Bruce? To deserve, and win her love, as De Longueville; and to marry her as King of Scotland, is the fond hope of your friend and brother Robert ——"

"P. S. I shall send you dispatches of my proceedings.—"

Wallace had just made a successful attack upon the outworks of Berwick, when this letter was put into his hand. He was surrounded by his chieftains; and having read it, he informed them, that Sir Thomas de Longueville was going to Hunting tower, with intent to make excursions and rid the neighbouring castles of the enemy.

"The hopes of his enterprising spirit," continued Wallace, "are so seconded by

his determination; that what he promises, he will perform; and we may soon expect to hear that we have no enemies in the Highlands."

But in this hope, Wallace was disappointed. Day after day passed, and no tidings from the north. He became anxious; and Bothwell and Edwin began to share his uneasiness. Continued successes against Berwick had assured him of a speedy surrender, when a Southron reinforcement being thrown in by sea, the confidence of the garrison was re-excited; and the ramparts being doubly manned, Wallace saw the only alternative was to attempt the possession of their ships, and turn the siege into a blockade. Should Bruce be prosperous in the Highlands, he would have full leisure to await the fall of Berwick upon this plan, and much blood might be spared. Intent and execution were twin-born in the breast of Wallace. By a masterly stroke, he effected his design on the shipping; and

having closed the Southrons within their walls, he dispatched Lord Bothwell to Hunting tower, to see Ruthven, to learn the state of military operations there, and above all, to bring back tidings of the prince.

On the evening of the very day in which Murray left Berwick, a desperate sally was made by the garrison ; but they were beaten back with great slaughter, and with such effect, that Wallace gained possession of one of their most commanding towers. The contest did not end till night; and after passing some time in the council-tent, listening to the suggestions of his friends relative to the use that might be made of the new acquisition, he retired to his own quarters at a late hour. At these momentous periods, he never seemed to need sleep : and seated at his table, settling the dispositions for the succeeding day, he marked not the time, till the flame of his exhausted lamp expired in the socket.—He replenished it; and had

again resumed his military labours, when the curtain which covered the door of his tent was drawn aside, and an armed man entered. Wallace looked up; and seeing that it was the Knight of the Green Plume, asked if any thing had occurred from the town.

"Nothing," replied the knight, in an agitated voice, and seating himself beside Wallace. "Any evil tidings from Perthshire?" demanded Wallace, who now hardly doubted that ill news had arrived of Bruce. "None," was the knight's reply; "but I am come to fulfil my promise to you; to unite myself for ever, heart and soul, to your destiny; or you behold me this night for the last time." Wallace, surprised at this address, and at the emotion which shook the frame of the unknown warrior, answered him with expressions of esteem, and added: "If it depends on me, to unite so brave a man to my friendship for ever, only speak the word, declare your name, and I am ready

to seal the compact." "My name," returned the knight, "will indeed put these protestations to the proof. I have fought by your side, Sir William Wallace. I would have died at any moment, to have spared that breast a wound; and yet I dread to raise this visor, to shew you who I am. A look will make me live, or blast me." "Your language confounds me, noble knight," replied Wallace; "I know of no man living, saving the base violators of Lady Helen Mar's liberty, who need tremble before my eyes. It is not possible, that either of these men is before me; and whoever you are, whatever you may have been, brave chieftain, your deeds have proved you worthy of a soldier's friendship, and I pledge you mine."

The knight was silent.—He took Wallace's hand—he grasped it;—the arms that held it did indeed tremble. Wallace again spoke.—"What is the meaning of this? I am no tyrant, no monarch, to excite these dreads. I have a power to

benefit, but none to injure." "To benefit and to injure!" cried the knight in a transport of emotion; "you have my life in your hands. Oh! grant it, as you value your own happiness and honour! Look on me, and say whether I am to live or die." As the warrior spoke, he cast himself impetuously on his knees, and threw open his visor. Wallace saw a fine but flushed face.—It was much overshadowed by the helmet. "My friend," said he, attempting to raise him by the hand which clasped his; "your words are mysteries to me; and so little right can I have to the power you ascribe to me, that, although it seems to me as if I had seen your features before, yet——" "You forget me," cried the knight, starting on his feet, and throwing off his helmet to the ground: "Again look on this face, and stab me at once, by a second declaration, that I am remembered no more!"

The countenance of Wallace now

shewed that he too well remembered it. He was pale and aghast. "Lady Mar," cried he, "not expecting to see you under a warrior's casque, you will pardon me, that when so apparelled, I should not immediately recognise the widow of my friend." "Ingrate! ingrate!" cried she, turning pale as himself; "and is it thus you answer, the sacrifices I have made for you? For you, I have committed an outrage on my nature; I have put on me this abhorrent steel; I have braved the dangers of many a hard-fought day; and all to guard your life; to convince you of a love unexampled in woman! and thus you recognise her, who has risked honour and life for you, with coldness and reproach!" "With neither, Lady Mar," returned he; "I am grateful for the generous motives of your conduct; but for the sake of the fair fame you confess you have endangered; in respect to the memory of him whose name you bear; I cannot but wish, that so hazardous an instance of

interest in me, had been left undone." "If that is all," returned Lady Mar, drawing towards him; "it is in your power to ward from me every stigma! Who will dare to cast one reflection on my fair fame, when you bear testimony to my purity? Who will asperse the name of Mar, when you displace it with that of Wallace? Make me yours, dearest of men," cried she, clasping his hands, "and you will receive one to your heart, who never knew how to love before; who will be to you, what woman never yet was; and who will bring you territories, if not more, yet nearly equal to those of the King of Scotland. My father, who held them during Lord Mar's life, is no more; and now, Countess of Strathearn and Princess of the Orkneys, I have it in my power to bring a sovereignty to your head, and the fondest of wives to your bosom." As she vehemently spoke, and clung to Wallace as if she had already a right to seek comfort within his arms, her tears and violent agitation so disconcerted him,

that for a few moments he could not find a reply. This short endurance of her passion, aroused her almost drooping hopes; and, intoxicated with so rapturous an illusion, she threw off the little restraint in which her awe of Wallace's coldness had confined her, and flinging herself on his breast, poured forth all her love and fond ambitions for him. In vain he attempted to interrupt her, to raise her with gentleness from her indecorous situation; she had no perception, but for the idea which had now taken possession of her heart; and whispering him softly, said, "Be but my husband, Wallace, and all rights shall perish before my love and your aggrandizement. In these arms you shall bless the day you first saw Joanna Strathearn!"

The prowess of the Knight of the Green Plume, the respect he owed to the widow of the Earl of Mar, the tenderness he ever felt for all of woman-kind, were all forgotten in the disgusting blandishments of this determined wanton. She wooed to

be his wife; but not with the chaste appeal of the widow of Mahlon. "Let me find favour in thy sight, for thou hast comforted me!" said the fair Moabitess, who, in a strange land, cast herself at the feet of her deceased husband's friend: "Spread thy garment over me, and let me be thy wife!" She was answered, "I will do all that thou requirest, for *thou art a virtuous woman!*" But neither the actions, nor the words, of Lady Mar, bore witness that she deserved this appellation. They were the dictates of a passion as impure as it was intemperate. Blinded by its fumes, she forgot the nature of the heart she sought to pervert to sympathy with hers. She saw not, that every look, and movement on her part, filled Wallace with aversion; and not until he forcibly broke from her, did she doubt the success of her fond caresses.

"Lady Mar," said he, "I must repeat, that I am not ungrateful for the proofs of regard you have bestowed on

me; but such excess of attachment, is lavished upon a man that is a bankrupt in love. I am cold as monumental marble to every touch of that passion, to which I was once but too entirely devoted. Bereaved of the object, I am punished; thus is my heart doomed to solitude on earth, for having made an idol of the angel that was sent to cheer my path to heaven."

Wallace said even more than this. He remonstrated with her in the gentlest manner, on the shipwreck she was making of her own happiness, in adhering thus tenaciously to a man, who could only regard her with the general sentiment of esteem. He urged her beauty, and yet youthful years. How many would be eager to win her love, and to marry her with honour; when, under the circumstances into which she had thrown herself with him, should she persist, nothing could accrue but disappointment and disgrace. While he continued to speak to her with the tender consideration of a

brother, she, who knew no gradations in the affections of the heart, doubted his words, and believed that a latent fire glowed in his breast which her art might still blow into a flame. She threw herself upon her knees, she wept, she implored his pity, she wound her arms around his, and bathed his hands with her tears; but still he continued to urge her, by every argument of female delicacy, to relinquish her ill-directed love; to return to her domains, before her absence could be generally known.—She looked up to read his countenance: a friend's anxiety, nay, authority, was there, but no glow of passion; all was calm and determined. Her beauty then had been shewn to a man without eyes; her tender eloquence, poured on an ear that was deaf; her blandishments lavished on a block of marble! In a paroxysm of despair, she dashed the hand she held, far from her; and standing proudly on her feet—"Hear me, thou man of stone!" cried she, "and answer

me on your life and honour, for both depend on your reply, Is Joanna Strathearn to be your wife or not?"

"Cease to urge me, unhappy lady," returned Wallace; "on what you already know the decision of this ever widowed heart." Lady Mar looked stedfastly at him: "Then receive my last determination!" and drawing near him, with a desperate and portentous expression in her countenance, as if she meant to whisper in his ear, she, suddenly, plucked St. Louis's dagger from his girdle, and struck it into his breast. Before it could penetrate to a mortal depth, he caught the hand which grasped the hilt. Her eyes glared with the fury of a maniac, and with a horrid laugh she exclaimed, "I have slain thee, insolent triumpher in my love and agonies!—Thou shalt not now deride me in the arms of thy minion; for I know, that it is not for the dead Marion you have trampled on my heart, but for the living Helen!" As she spoke, he

moved her hold from the dagger, and drew the weapon from the wound. A torrent of blood flowed over his vest, and stained the hand that grasped hers. She turned of a deadly paleness, but a demoniac joy still gleamed in her eyes. "Lady Mar," cried he, "I pardon this outrage. Go in peace, and I shall never breathe to man or woman the occurrences of this night. Only remember, that with regard to Lady Helen, my wishes are as pure as her own virgin innocence." "So they may be now, vainly boasting, immaculate Wallace!" answered she, with bitter derision: "men are saints, when their passions are satisfied. Think not to impose on her, who knows how this vestal Helen followed you in page's attire, and without one stigma being cast on her maiden delicacy! I am not to learn the days, and the nights, she passed alone with you in the woods of Normandy!—Did you not follow her to France?—Did you not tear her from the arms of Lord

Aymer de Valence? and now, relinquishing her yourself, you leave a dishonoured bride to cheat the vows of some honester man!—Wallace, I now know you: and as I have been fool enough to love you beyond all woman's love, I swear by the powers of heaven and hell, to make you feel the weight of woman's hatred!"

Her denunciations had no effect on Wallace: but her slander against her unoffending daughter-in-law, agitated him with an indignation, that almost dispossessed him of himself. In few, but hurried, and vehement words, he denied all that she had alledged against Helen; and appealed to the whole court of France, to witness her spotless innocence. Lady Mar exulted in this emotion; though every sentence, by the interest it displayed in its object, seemed to establish the truth of a suspicion which she had only uttered from the vague workings of her rancour. Triumphing in the belief, that he had found another as frail as herself;

and yet maddened, that another should have been preferred before her, her jealous pride blazed into redoubled flame.—"Swear," cried she, "till I see the blood of that false heart, forced to my feet, to ratify the oath; and still I shall believe the base daughter of Mar a wanton. I go, not to proclaim her dishonour to the world, but to deprive her of her lover; to yield the rebel Wallace, into the hands of justice! When on the scaffold, proud exulter in those now detested beauties, remember that it was Joanna Strathearn who laid thy head upon the block; who consigned those limbs, of Heaven's own statuary, to decorate the spires of Scotland! Remember that my curse pursues you here and hereafter! A livid fire seemed to dart from her eyes; her countenance was torn, as by some internal fiend; and with the last malediction, thundering from her tongue, she darted from his sight.

CHAP. IV.

THE next morning Wallace was recalled from the confusion into which his nocturnal visitor had thrown his mind, by the entrance of Ker, who came as usual with the reports of the night, and to receive his orders for the day. In the course of their conversation, Ker mentioned, that about three hours before sunrise, the Knight of the Green Plume had left the camp with his dispatches for Stirling. Wallace was scarcely surprised at this ready falsehood of Lady Mar's; and not intending to betray her, he merely said; "Long ere he appears again, I hope we shall have good tidings from our friends on the Tay."

But day succeeded day, and notwithstanding Bothwell's embassy, no accounts

arrived.—The Countess had left an emissary in the Scottish camp, who did as she had done before, intercept all messengers from Perthshire.

Indeed, from the first of her flight to Wallace, to the hour of her quitting him, her measures were devised with consummate art.—Previous to her stealing from Hunting tower she had tutored the seneschal of that castle (a creature of her own,) to tell Lady Ruthven, on the morning of her disappearance, that he had just spoken with a knight in the wood near St. Concal's well, who came to say, that the Countess of Strathearn and Mar had commanded him to inform her family that she was gone on a secret mission to Norway; and therefore desired her sister-in-law, for the sake of the cause most dear to her, not to acquaint Lord Ruthven, or any of his friends, with her departure, till she should return with happy news for Scotland. The man said, that after declaring this, the knight

rode hastily away. But this precaution, which did indeed impose on the innocent credulity, of her husband's sister and daughter, failed to satisfy the Countess herself. Fearful that Helen might communicate her flight to Wallace, and so excite his suspicion that she was not far from him; from the moment of her joining him at Linlithgow, she intercepted every letter from Hunting tower: and when Bruce went to that castle, she continued the practice with double vigilance; being jealous of what might be said or Helen by this Sir Thomas de Longueville, in whom he seemed so unreservedly to confide. To this end, even after she left the camp, all packets from Perthshire were conveyed to her by the spy she had stationed near Wallace: all which were sent thence, to Hunting tower, were stopped by the treacherous seneschal and thrown into the flames. No letters ever came from Helen: a few bore Lord Ruthven's superscription; and all the

rest were addressed by Sir Thomas de Longueville to Wallace. She broke the seals of this correspondence; but she looked in vain on their contents. Bruce and his friend, as well as Ruthven, wrote in a cypher; and only one passage, which the former had by chance written in the common character, could she ever make out.—It ran thus:

"I have just returned to Hunting tower after the capture of Kinfouns. Lady Helen sits by me on one side, Isabella on the other. Isabella smiles on me like the spirit of happiness. Helen's look is not less gracious, for I tell her I am writing to Sir William Wallace. She smiles, but it is with such a smile as that with which a saint would relinquish to Heaven the dearest object of its love." "Helen," said I, "what shall I say from you to our friend?" She blushed. "That I pray for him." "That you think of him?" "That I pray for him," repeated she more emphatically; "that is the

way I always think of my preserver." Her manner checked me, my dear Wallace; but I would give worlds, that you could bring your heart to make this sweet vestal smile, as I do her sister!"

Lady Mar crushed the registered wish, so hostile to her hopes, in her hand; and though she was never able to decypher a word more of Bruce's numerous letters; (many of which, could she have read, contained complaints of that silence which she had so cruelly occasioned on both sides;) she took, and destroyed them all.

She had ever shunned the penetrating eyes of Bothwell; and to have him on the spot when she should discover herself to Wallace, she thought would only invite discomfiture; and therefore, affecting to share the general anxiety respecting the failure of communications from the north, she suggested to Ramsay, the propriety of sending some one of pe-

culiar trust to make inquiries. By covert insinuations, she easily induced the young chieftain to propose Bothwell to Wallace: and on the very night that her machinations had prevailed to dispatch him on this embassy, impatient, yet doubting and agitated, she went to declare, and throw herself on the bosom of the man, for whom she thus sunk herself in shame and falsehood.

Wallace, though he heard the denunciation with which she left his presence, did not conceive that it was more than the evanescent rage of disappointed passion; and anticipating persecutions, rather from her love than her revenge, he was relieved, and not alarmed, by the intelligence that the Knight of the Green Plume had really taken his departure. More delicate of Lady Mar's honour, than she was of her own, when he met Edwin at the works, he silently acquiesced in his belief, that their late com-

panion was gone with dispatches to the Regent, who was now removed to Stirling.

After frequent sallies from the garrison, in which the Southrons were always beaten back with great loss, the lines of circumvallation were at last finished, and Wallace hourly anticipated the surrender of the enemy. Reduced for want of provisions, and seeing all hope of succours cut off by the seizure of the fleet, the inhabitants, detesting their new rulers, rose in strong bodies, and lying in wait for the soldiers of the garrison, murdered them secretly and in great numbers; and by the punishments which the governor thought proper to inflict on the guilty and guiltless, (as he could not discover who were actually the assassins,) the distress of the town was augmented to a most horrible degree. Such a state of things could not be long maintained; and the Southron commander, aware of the peril of his troops; that should he

continue in the fortress, they must assuredly perish, either by the insurrection within, or the enemy from without; determined no longer to await the appearance of a relief, which might never arrive: and to stop the internal confusion, he sent a flag of truce to Wallace, accepting, and signing, his offered terms of capitulation. By this deed, he engaged to open the gates to him at sunset; but begged the interval between noon and that hour, that he might settle the animosities between his men and the people, before he should surrender his brave followers entirely into the hands of the Scots.

Having dispatched his assent to this request of the governor's, Wallace retired to his own tent.—That he had effected his purpose, without the carnage which must have ensued, had he again stormed the place, gratified his humanity; and congratulating himself on such a termination of the siege, he turned with more than usual cheerfulness towards a herald who

brought him a packet from the north.—The man withdrew, and Wallace broke the seal; but what was his astonishment to find it an order for him immediately to repair to Stirling, and there answer, before the Regent and the abthanes of Scotland,[d] on his allegiance to his country, certain charges, brought against him by an authority too illustrious to set aside without examination. At the close of this citation, they added, "The Scots, of whom Sir William Wallace has so long declared himself the champion, will now be proud to shew their virtue and independence, by the impartiality with which they will award the sentence of justice." He had hardly read this extraordinary mandate, when Sir Simon Fraser, his second in command, entered, and with consternation in his looks, put an open letter into his hand.—It ran as follows:

"Allegations of treason against the liberties of Scotland, having been prefer-

red against Sir William Wallace; until he clears himself of the charge, you, Sir Simon Fraser, are directed to assume in his stead, the command of the forces which form the blockade of Berwick; and as the first act of your duty, you are ordered to send the accused towards Stirling, under a strong guard, within an hour after you receive this dispatch.

Signed, "JOHN CUMMIN,

Earl of Badenoch, and Lord Regent of Scotland."

Stirling-Castle.

Wallace returned the letter to Fraser, with an undisturbed countenance: "I have received a similar order from the Regent," said he; "and though I cannot guess the source whence these accusations spring, I fear not to meet them; and shall require no guard, to speed me forward to the scene of my defence. I am ready to go, my friend; and happy to resign the brave garrison that has just surrendered, to your honour and amity." Fraser

answered, that he should be emulous to follow his example in all things, and to abide by his agreements, with the Southron governor. He then, by Wallace's desire, retired to prepare the army for the departure of their commander; and, much against his feelings, to call out the escort that was to attend him to Stirling. "It is right," added Wallace, "that I should pay every respect to the tribunal of my country; and even with regard to this ceremonial of a guard, I deem it proper to submit to the ordinance of its rulers."

When the marshal of the army read to the officers and men, the orders of the Regent, a speechless consternation seized on one part of the troops, and as violent an indignation agitated the other to tumult. The veterans who had followed the Chief of Ellerslie from the first hour of his appearing as a patriot in arms, could not brook this aspersion upon their leader's honour; and had it not been for the vehe-

ment exhortations of the no less incensed, though more moderate Scrymgeour and Ramsay, they would have arisen in instant revolt. Though persuaded to sheath their half-drawn swords, they would not be withheld from immediately quitting the field, and marching directly to Wallace's tent. He was conversing with Edwin when they arrived; and in some measure he had broken the shock to him of so dishonouring a charge on his friend, by his being the first to communicate it. In vain Edwin strove to guess who could be the inventor of so dire a falsehood against the truest of Scots; and he awakened that alarm in Wallace for Bruce, which could not be excited for himself, by suggesting, that perhaps some intimation had been given to the most ambitious of the abthanes respecting the arrival of their rightful prince. "And yet," returned Wallace, "I cannot altogether suppose that; for even their desires of self-aggrandizement, could not torture my share in Bruce's res-

toration to his country, into any thing like treason; our friend's rights are too undisputed for that: and all I should dread by a premature discovery of his being in Scotland, would be secret machinations against his life. There are men in this land who might attempt it; and it is our duty, my dear Edwin, to suffer death upon the rack, rather than betray our knowledge of him. But," added he with a smile, "we need not disturb ourselves with such thoughts; the Regent is in our prince's confidence; and did this accusation relate to him, he would not, on such a plea, have arraigned me as a traitor."

Edwin again revolved in his mind the nature of the charge, and who the villain could be who had made it; and at last suddenly recollecting the Knight of the Green Plume, he asked, if it were not possible that, as that stranger had sedulously kept himself from being known, he might be the traitor? "I must confess to you," continued Edwin, "that this knight, who

ever appeared to dislike your closest friends, seems to me the most probable instigator of this mischief; and is, perhaps, the author of the strange failure of communication between you and Bruce! Accounts have not arrived, even since Bothwell went, and that is more than natural."

Wallace changed colour at this last suggestion, but merely replied, "A few hours will decide your suspicion, for I shall lose no time in confronting my enemy." "I go with you;" said Edwin: "never while I live, will I consent to lose sight of my dearest friend again!"

It was at this moment, that the tumultuous approach of the Lanerkers was heard without. The whole band rushed into the tent; and Stephen Ireland, who was foremost, raising his voice above the rest, exclaimed, "They are the traitors, my lord, who accuse you! It is determined by our corrupted thanes, that Scotland shall be sacrificed; and you are to

be made the first victim. Think they, then, that we will obey such parricides? Lead us on, thou only worthy of the name of Regent, and we will hurl these usurpers from their thrones!"

This demand was reiterated by every man present; was echoed by hundreds who surrounded the tent. The Bothweller's and Ramsay's followers, had joined the men of Lanerk; and the mutiny against the orders of the Regent became general. Wallace walked out into the open field, and mounting his horse, rode forth amongst them. At sight of him, the air resounded with acclamations, unceasingly proclaiming him their only leader, till, stretching out his arm to them in token of silence, they became profoundly still. "My friends, and brother soldiers," cried he; "as you value the honour of William Wallace, as you have hitherto done, at this moment, yield him implicit obedience." "For ever!" shouted the Bothwell-men. "We will never obey any

other!" rejoined his faithful Lanerkers; and with an increased uproar, they demanded to be led to Stirling. His extended hand again stilled the storm, and he resumed: "You shall go with me to Stirling, but as my friends only; never as the enemies of the Regent of Scotland. I am charged with treason: it is his duty to try me by the laws of my country; it is mine to submit to the inquisition.—I fear it not, and I invite you to accompany me; not to brand me with infamy, by passing between my now darkened honour, and the light of justice; not to avenge an iniquitous sentence, passed on a guiltless man; but to witness my acquittal; and in that, my triumph over them who through my breast strike at a greater than I."

At this mild persuasive, every upraised sword dropped before him; and Wallace, turning his horse into the path which led towards Stirling, his men, with a silent determination to share the fate of their master, fell into regular marching order,

and followed him. Edwin, confounded at the present situation of his ungratefully-suspected friend, rode by his side, as much wondering at the unaffected composure with which he sustained such a weight of insult, as at the Regent, who could be so unjust to tried virtue as to lay it upon him.

At the west of the camp, the detachment appointed to guard Wallace in his arrest came up with him.—It was with difficulty that Fraser could find an officer who would command it; and he who did at last consent, appeared before his prisoner with down-cast eyes, seeming rather the culprit than the guard. Wallace, observing his confusion, said a few gracious words to him; and the officer, more overcome by this, than he could have been with reproaches, burst into tears, and retired into the rear of his men.

CHAP. V.

WALLACE entered on the Carse of Stirling, that scene of his many victories, and beheld its northern horizon white with tents.—A few miles beyond the Carron, an armed troop, headed by young Lord Fyfe, the son of him who fell at Falkirk, met him. Officers, appointed for the purpose, had apprized the abthanes of Wallace having left Berwick; and knowing by the same means, all his movements, this cavalcade was ready to hold his followers in awe, and to conduct him without opposition to Stirling. In case it should be insufficient to quail the spirit of the brave Lanerkers, or to intimidate him, who had never yet been made to fear by mortal man, the Regent, having summoned all the vassals of the various

seigniories of Cummin, had planted them in battle array before the walls of Stirling. But whether they were friends or foes, was equally indifferent to Wallace; for, strong in integrity, he went securely forward to his trial; and though inwardly marvelling at such a panoply of war, being called out to induce him to comply with so simple an act of obedience to the laws, he met the heralds of the Regent with as much ease, as if they had been coming to congratulate him on the capitulation, the ratification of which he brought in his hand.

By his order, his faithful followers, (who took a pride in obeying with the most scrupulous exactness, the injunctions of their now deposed commander,) encamped under Sir Alexander Scrymgeour, to the north-west of the castle near Ballochgeich. It was then night. In the morning, at an early hour, Wallace, attended by Edwin, was summoned before the council in the citadel.

On his re-entrance into that room, which he had left, the dictator of the kingdom, when every knee bent, and every head bowed to his supreme mandate, he found not one who even greeted his appearance with the commonest ceremony of courtesy. Badenoch, the Regent, sat upon the throne, with evident symptoms of being yet an invalid. The lords Athol and Buchan, and the numerous chiefs of the clans of Cummin, were seated on his right: on his left were arranged the earls of Fyfe and Lorn, Lord Soulis; and every Scottish baron of power, who had, at any time, shewn himself hostile to Wallace; others, who were of easy faith to a tale of malice, sat with them: and the rest of the assembly was filled up with men of better families, than personal fame; and whose names swelled a list, without adding any true importance to the side on which they appeared. A few, and those a very few, who respected Wallace, were present;

and they, not because they were sent for, (great care having been taken not to summon his friends) but in consequence of a rumour of the charge having reached them: and these were, the lords Lennox and Loch-awe, with Kirkpatrick, and two or three chieftains from the western Highlands. None of them had arrived, till within a few minutes of the council being opened; and Wallace was entering at one door, as they appeared at the other.

At sight of him, a low whisper buzzed through the hall, and a marshal took the plumed bonnet from his hand, which, out of respect to the nobility of Scotland, he had raised from his head at his entrance. The man, then preceding him to a spot directly in front of the throne, said, in a voice which declared the reluctance with which he uttered the words, "Sir William Wallace! being charged with treason;—by an ordinance of Fergus the First, you must *stand uncovered* before the representative of the majesty of Scot-

land, until that loyalty is proved, which will again restore you to a seat amongst her faithful barons."

Wallace, with the same equanimity as that with which he would have mounted the regal chair, bowed his head to the marshal in token of acquiescence. But Edwin, whose indignation was re-awakened, at this exclusion of his friend from the privilege of his birth, said something so warm to the marshal, that Wallace, in a low voice, was obliged to check his vehemence, by a declaration—that it was his determination, (however obsolete the custom, and revived in his case only,) to submit himself in every respect to whatever was exacted of him by the laws of his country.

On Loch-awe and Lennox observing him stand thus, before the bonnetted and seated chiefs, (a stretch of magisterial prerogative, which had not been exercised on a Scottish knight, for many a century,) they took off their caps, and bow-

ing to Wallace, refused to occupy their places on the benches while the defender of Scotland stood. Kirkpatrick drew eagerly towards him, and throwing down his casque and sword at his feet, cried in a loud voice, "Lie there, till the only true man in all this land, commands me to take ye up in his defence. He alone, had courage to look the Southrons in the face, and to drive their king over the borders, while his present accusers skulked in their chains!" Wallace regarded this ebullition from the heart of the honest veteran, with a look, that was eloquent to all. He would have animatedly praised, such an instance of fearless gratitude expressed to another; and when it was directed to himself, his ingenuous soul shewed what he felt, in every feature of his beaming countenance.

"Is it thus, presumptuous knight of Ellerslie?" cried Soulis, "that by your looks, you dare encourage contumely to the Lord Regent, and his peers?" Wal-

lace did not deign him an answer, but turning calmly towards the throne, "Representative of my king!" said he, "in duty to the power whose authority you wear, I have obeyed your summons; and I here await the appearance of the accuser, who has had the hardihood to brand the name of William Wallace with disloyalty to prince or people."

The Regent was embarrassed.—He did not suffer his eyes to meet those of Wallace, but looked from side to side in manifest confusion during this address; and when it ended, without a reply to the chief, he turned to Lord Athol, and called on him to open the charge. Athol required not a second summons: he rose immediately, and, in a bold and positive manner, accused Wallace of having been won over by Philip of France, to sell those rights of supremacy to him, which, with a feigned patriotism, his sword had wrested from the grasp of England. For this treachery, Philip was to endow him

with the sovereignty of Scotland; and as a pledge of the compact, he invested him with the principality of Gascony in France. "This is the ground-work of his treason;" continued Athol; "but the superstructure is to be cemented with our blood.—I have seen a list in his own handwriting, in which are the names of those chiefs, whose lives are to pave his way to the throne."

At this point of the charge, Edwin, wrought up beyond longer forbearance, sprang forward, but Wallace, perceiving the intent of his movement, caught him by the arm, and by a look reminded him of his recently repeated engagement to keep silent.

"Produce the list;" cried Lord Lennox; "no evidence that does not bring proofs to our eyes, ought to have any weight with us, against the man who has bled in every vein for Scotland." "It shall be brought to your eyes;" returned Athol; "that, and other damning proofs, shall convince

this too credulous country, of its long abused confidence." "I see them now!" cried Kirkpatrick, who had frowningly listened to Athol; "the abusers of my country's confidence, betray themselves at this moment, by their eagerness to impeach her friends; and I pray Heaven, that, before they mislead others into so black a conspiracy, the lie in their throats may choke its inventors!" "We all know," cried Athol, turning on Kirkpatrick, "to whom you belong.—You were bought, with the horrid grant to mangle the body of the slain Cressingham; a deed, which has brought a stigma on the Scottish name, never to be erased but by the immolation of its perpetrators. For this savage triumph, did you sell yourself to William Wallace: and a bloody champion, would you always prove, of a most secretly murderous master!"

"Hear you this, and bear it?" cried Kirkpatrick and Edwin in one breath, and grasping their daggers; Edwin's, the

next moment, flashed in his hand. "Seize them!" cried Athol; "my life is threatened by his myrmidons."—Marshals instantly approached, to put the order in execution; but Wallace, (who had hitherto stood in silent dignity, allowing his calumniator to disgorge all his venom, before he would condescend to point out to them, who never ought to have suspected him, where the poison lay;) turned to the men, and with that tone of justice, which had ever commanded from his lips, bade them forbear:—"Touch these knights, at your peril, marshals!" said he: "No man in this chamber is above the laws; and they protect every Scot who resents unjust aspersions upon his own character, or irrelevant and prejudicing attacks on that of an arraigned friend. It is before the majesty of the law, that I now stand; but were injury to usurp its place, not all the lords in Scotland, should detain me a moment in a scene so unworthy of my country." The marshals retreated; for

they had been accustomed to regard with implicit deference, the opinion of Sir William Wallace on the laws; and though he now stood in the light of their violator, yet, memory bore testimony, that he had always read them aright; and to this hour, had ever appeared to make them the guide of his actions.

Athol saw that none in the assembly, had courage to enforce this act of his violence; and blazing with fury, he poured his whole wrath upon Wallace:—"Imperious, arrogant traitor!" cried he; "this presumption, only deepens our impression of your guilt!—Demean yourself with more reverence to this august court, or expect to be sentenced on the proof which such insolence amply gives; we require no other, to proclaim your domineering spirit; and at once to condemn you as the premeditated tyrant of our land."—"Lord Athol," replied Wallace, "what is just, I would say in the face of all the courts in Christendom. It is not

in the power of man, to make me silent, when I see the laws of my country outraged, and my countrymen oppressed. Though I may submit my own cheek to the blow, I will not permit their's to share the stroke. I have answered you, earl, to this point; and am ready to hear you to the end."

Athol resumed:—" I am not your only accuser, proudly-confident man; you shall see one, whose truth cannot be doubted; and whose first glance, will bow that haughty spirit, and cover that bold front with the livery of shame! My lord," cried he, turning to the Regent, " I shall bring a most illustrious witness before you; one who will prove on oath, that it was the intention of this arch-hypocrite, this angler for women's hearts, this perverter of men's understandings,—before another moon, to bury, deep in blood, the very people, whom he now insidiously affects to protect! But, to open your, and the nation's eyes at once; to over-

whelm him with his fate; I now call forth the evidence."

The marshals opened a door in the side of the hall, and led a lady forward, habited in regal splendour, and covered from head to foot with a veil of so transparent a texture, that her costly apparel, and majestic contour, were distinctly seen. She was conducted to a chair, that was elevated on a tapestried platform, at a few paces from where Wallace stood. On her being seated, the Regent rose, and in a tremulous voice addressed her:—

"Joanna, Countess of Strathearn and Mar, and Princess of the Orkneys, we adjure thee, by thy princely dignity; and in the name of the King of Kings, to bear a just witness to the truth or falsehood of the charges of treason and conspiracy, now brought against Sir William Wallace."

The name of his accuser, made Wallace start: and the sight of her unblushing face, for she threw aside her veil the mo-

ment she was addressed, overspread his cheek with a tinge of that shame for her, which she was now too hardened in determined crime to feel herself. Edwin gazed at her in speechless horror; while she, casting a glance on Wallace, in which the full purpose of her soul was declared, turned with a softened, though majestic air, to the Regent, and spoke:—

"My lord!" said she, "you see before you a woman, who never knew what it was to feel a self-reproachful pang, till an evil hour brought her to receive an obligation from that insidious, treacherous man. But, as my first passion has ever been the love of my country; I will prove it to this good assembly, by making, before them, the confession of what was once my heart's weakness; and by that candour, I trust, they will fully honour the rest of my narrative."

A clamour of approbation resounded through the hall. Lennox and Loch-awe looked on each other with amazement.

Kirkpatrick, recollecting the scenes at Dumbarton, exclaimed—" Jezabel!"—but the ejaculation was lost in the general burst of applause; and the Countess, after having cast down her eyes with affected sensibility, again looked up and resumed:—

" I am not to tell you, my lord, that Sir William Wallace released the late Earl of Mar, and myself, from Southron captivity at Dumbarton, and in this citadel. Our deliverer was, what you see him; fraught with attractions, which he too successfully directed against the peace of a young woman, married to a man of paternal years. While to all the rest of the world, he seemed to consecrate himself to the memory of his murdered wife, to me alone, he unveiled his impassioned heart. I revered my nuptial vow too sincerely, to listen to him with the complacency he wished: but, I blush to own, that his tears, his agonies of love, his youthful graces; and the virtues I believ-

ed he possessed, (for well he knows to assume!) co-operating with my ardent gratitude, wrought such a change in my breast, that I became wretched. No guilty wish was there; but an admiration of him, a pity, which undermined my health, and left me miserable! I forbade him to approach me. I tried to wrest him from my memory; and nearly had succeeded, when I was informed by my late husband's nephew, the youth who now stands beside Sir William Wallace, that he was returned under an assumed name from France. Then I feared that all my inward struggles were to re-commence. I had once conquered myself: for, abhorring the estrangement of my thoughts from my wedded lord, during his life; on his death, I had, in penance for my involuntary crime, refused Sir William Wallace my hand. His re-appearance, filled me with tumults, which only they who would sacrifice all they prize, to a sense of duty, can know.

Edwin Ruthven left me at Hunting tower. That very evening, as I was walking alone in the garden, I was surprised by the sudden approach of an armed man. He threw a scarf over my head to prevent my screams, but I fainted with terror. He then took me from the garden by the way he had entered, and placing me on a horse before him, galloped with me, whither I know not! but on my recovery, I found myself in a chamber with an old woman standing beside me, and the same warrior; who was dressed in green armour, with his visor so closed, that I could not see his face. On my expressing alarm at my situation, he addressed me in French; telling me, that he had provided a man to carry an excuse to Hunting tower which would prevent all pursuit; and then he put a letter into my hand, which, he said, he brought from Sir William Wallace. Anxious to know what he intended by this act; and believing that a man who had sworn to

me so much devoted love, could not seriously premeditate further outrage, I broke the seal, and as nearly as I can recollect read to this effect:—

"That his passion was so imperious, that he was determined to make me his, even in spite of the sublime sentiments of female purity which, while they tortured him, rendered me dearer in his eyes. He told me, that as he had often read in my downcast blushes, the sympathy which my too severe virtue made me conceal,—he would now wrest me from my cheerless widowhood; and having nothing in reality to reproach myself with, compel me to be happy. His friend, the only confident of his love, had brought me to a spot whence I could not fly: there I should remain, till he could leave the army for a few days, and, throwing himself on my compassion and tenderness, be received as the most faithful of lovers, the fondest of husbands.

"This letter," continued the Countess,

"was followed by many others; and, suffice it to a say, that the latent affection in my heart, and his subduing love, were too powerful advocates in his cause. How his letters were brought, I know not; but they were duly presented to me by the old woman; who, remained firm against answering me any questions. She likewise carried away my, perhaps, too fond replies. At last the Knight of the Green Plume re-appeared." "Prodigious villain!" broke from the lips of Edwin. The Countess turned her eye on him for a moment, and then resumed: "He was the warrior, who had borne me from Hunting tower; and from that hour, until the period I now speak of, I had never seen him. He put another packet into my hand; desiring me, to peruse it with attention, and return Sir William Wallace a verbal answer by him. Yes! was all he required. I retired to open it; and, what was my horror, when I read a perfect developement of the treasons for

which he is now brought to account!—By some mistake of my character, he had conceived me to be ambitious; and knowing himself master of my heart, he fancied himself lord of my conscience also. He wrote, that until he saw me, he had no other end in his exertions for Scotland, than her rescue from a foreign yoke; *but*, added he, *from the moment in which I first beheld my adored Joanna, I aspired to place a crown on her brows!* He then told me, that he did not deem the time of its presentation to him on the Carse of Stirling, a safe period for its acceptance; neither was he tempted to run the risk of maintaining an unsteady throne, when I was not free to enjoy it: but since the death of Lord Mar, every wish, every hope was re-awakened; and he had determined to become a king.—Philip of France had made secret articles with him to this end. He was to hold Scotland of him.—And, to make the surrender of his country's liberties, sure to Philip; and the sceptre

to himself, and his posterity; he attempted to persuade me, that there would be no crime in destroying the chiefs, whose names he enrolled in this list. The pope, he added, would absolve me for a transgression, dictated by love; and on our bridal day, he proposed that the deed should be done.—He would invite all these lords to a feast; and poison, or the dagger, should soon lay them at his feet.

"So impious a proposal, immediately restored me to myself. My love, at once turned to the most decided abhorrence: and hastening to the Knight of the Green Plume, I told him, to carry my resolution to his master; that I would never see him more, till I should appear as his accuser before the tribunal of his country. The knight tried to dissuade me from my purpose, but in vain: and becoming alarmed at the punishments that might await himself, as the agent of such treason, a sudden remorse seized him; and he confessed to me, that the scene of his

first appearance at Linlithgow, was devised by Wallace; who, unknown to all others, had brought him from France, as an assistant in schemes, not to be confided to Scotland's friends. If I would guarantee his life, he offered to take me from the place where I was then confined, and convey me safe to Stirling. All he asked was, that I would allow him to be the bearer of the casket which contained Sir William Wallace's letters; and suffer my eyes to be blindfolded during the first part of our journey.—This I consented to, but the list I had undesignedly put into my bosom.—My head was again wrapped in a thick veil, and we set out. It was very dark; and we travelled long, and swiftly, till we came to a wood. There was neither moon nor stars to point out any habitation.—But I was fatigued; my conductor persuaded me; and I dismounted, to take rest. I slept beneath the trees. In the morning, when I awoke, I in vain looked round for the knight, and

called him; he was gone; and I saw him no more. I then explored my way to Stirling; to warn my country of its danger; to unmask to the world, the direst hypocrite that ever prostituted the name of virtue."

The Countess ceased; and a hundred voices broke out at once, pouring invectives on the murderous ambition of Sir William Wallace, and invoking the Regent, to pass some signal condemnation on so monstrous a crime. In vain Kirkpatrick thundered forth all that was in his indignant soul; he was unheard in the tumult: but going up to the Countess, he accused her to her face, of ingratitude and falsehood; and charged her with a design, from some really treasonable motive, to destroy the only sure hope of her country.

"And will you not speak?" cried Edwin, in agony of spirit clasping Wallace's arm; "will you not speak, before these ungrateful men shall dare to brand your

ever honoured name with infamy?—— Make yourself be heard, my noblest friend! confute that wicked woman, who, too surely, has proved what I suspected, that this knight came to be a traitor." "I will speak my Edwin," returned Wallace, "at the proper moment; but not in this tumult of my enemies.—Rely on it, your friend will submit to no unjust decree."

"Where is this Knight of the Green Plume?" cried Lennox, almost startled in his opinion of Wallace, by the consistency of the Countess's narrative: "No mark of dishonour shall be passed on Sir William Wallace, without the strictest scrutiny. Let the mysterious stranger be found, and confronted with Lady Strathearn." Notwithstanding the earl's insisting on impartial justice, she perceived the doubt in his countenance, and eager to maintain her advantage, replied— "The knight, I fear, has fled beyond our search: but, that I may not want a witness to corroborate the love I once bore

this arch-hypocrite; and, consequently, the sacrifice I make to loyalty, in thus unveiling him to the world; I call upon you, Lord Lennox, to say whether you did not observe at Dumbarton castle, the state of my too grateful heart!"

Lennox, who well remembered her conduct in the citadel of that fortress, hesitated to answer; aware that his reply would substantiate a guilt, which he now feared was but too strongly made manifest. Every ear hung on his answer. Wallace saw what was passing in his mind; and determined to allow all men to shew what was in their hearts towards him, and justice, before he would interrupt them with his defence, he looked towards the earl and said, "Do not hesitate, my lord; speak all that you know or think of me. Could the deeds of my life, be written on yon blue vault;" added he, pointing to the heavens; "and my breast be laid open for men to scan, I should be content: for then Scotland would know me,

as my Creator knows me; and the evidence, which now makes even friendship doubt, would meet the reception due to calumny."

Lord Lennox felt the last remark; and, filled with remorse, for having, for a moment, credited any thing against the frank spirit which gave him this permission, he replied, "To Lady Strathearn's question, I must answer, that at Dumbarton I did perceive her preference of Sir William Wallace; but I never saw any thing in him, to warrant the idea that it was reciprocal. And yet, were it even so, that bears nothing to the point of the Countess's accusation; and, notwithstanding her princely rank, and the deference all would pay to the widow of Lord Mar, we cannot, as true Scots, relinquish our faith in a man who has so eminently served his country, to any single witness."

"No!" cried Loch-awe: "If the Knight of the Green Plume be above ground, he shall be brought before this

tribunal. He alone can be the traitor; and to destroy us, by exciting suspicions of our best defender, has wrought this device to deceive the Countess; and by her means, this assembly, and the country at large." "No, no!" interrupted she; "I read the whole in his own hand-writing; and this list of the barons, condemned by him to die, will fully evince his guilt. Even your name, too generous earl, is in the horrid catalogue."——As she spoke, she rose eagerly, to hand to him the scroll.

"Let me now speak, or stab me to the heart!" hastily whispered Edwin, to his friend. Wallace did not withhold him, for he guessed what would be the remark of his ardent soul. "Hear that woman!" cried the vehement youth to the Regent, "and say, whether she now speaks the language of one, who had ever loved the virtues of Sir William Wallace? Were she innocent of malice towards the deliverer of Scotland, would she not have

rejoiced in Lord Loch-awe's supposition, that the Green Knight was the traitor?—Or, if that scroll she has now given into his lordship's hand, be too nicely forged, for her to detect its not being indeed the hand-writing of the noblest of men; would she not have shewn some sorrow, at least, at being obliged to maintain the guilt of one, she professes once to have loved?—But here, her malice has overstepped her art: and after having promoted the success of her tale, by so cunningly mingling truths of no moment, with falsehoods of capital import, that in acknowledging the one, we seem to grant the other;—she falls into her own snare;—and even a beardless boy, can discern, that however vile the Green Knight may be, she shares his wickedness!"

While Edwin spoke, Lady Strathearn's countenance underwent a thousand changes: twice, she attempted to rise and interrupt him; but Sir Roger Kirkpatrick having fixed his eyes on her, with a me-

nacing determination to prevent her, she found herself obliged to remain quiescent. Full of a newly excited fear, that Wallace had confided to her nephew, the last scene in his tent, she started up as he seemed to pause, and with assumed mildness, again addressing the Regent, said—that before the words of any follower of Wallace, could sink into impartial minds, she thought it just to inform the council, of the infatuated attachment of Edwin Ruthven to the accused; and she concluded, by asserting, that she had ample cause for knowing that the boy was so bewitched by the commander, who had flattered his youthful vanity, by loading him with distinctions only due to approved valour in manhood, that he was ready at any time to sacrifice every consideration of truth, reason, and duty, to please Sir William Wallace.

"That may be, lady," said Lord Lochawe, interrupting her; "but as I know no occasion, in which it is possible for

Sir William Wallace to falsify the truth, I call upon him, in justice to himself, and to his country, to reply to three questions!"——Wallace bowed to the venerable earl, and he proceeded—" Sir William Wallace, are you guilty, or not guilty, of the charge brought against you, of a design to mount the throne of Scotland by means of the King of France?"

Wallace replied, "I never designed to mount the throne of Scotland, either by my own means, or by any other man's."

Loch-awe proceeded: "Was this scroll, containing the names of certain Scottish chiefs noted down for assassination, written by you, or under your connivance?"

"I never saw the scroll nor heard of the scroll, until this hour. And harder than death, is the pang at my heart, when a Scottish chief finds it necessary to ask me such a question regarding a people,

to save even the least of whom, he has ever seen me ready to resign my life!"

"Another question;" replied Loch-awe; "and then, bravest of men, if your country acquits you not in thought and deed, Campbell of Loch-awe sits no more amongst its judges!—What is your knowledge of the Knight of the Green Plume, that you should intrust him, in preference to any Scottish friend, with your wishes respecting the Countess of Strathearn?"

Wallace's answer was brief: "I never had any wishes respecting the wife, or the widow, of my friend the Earl of Mar, that I did not impart to every chieftain in the camp; and those wishes went no further than for her safety. As to love, that is a passion I shall know no more; and Lady Strathearn can alone say, what is the end she aims at by attributing feelings to me, with regard to her, which I never conceived,—and words which I

never uttered. Like this passion, with which she says she inspired me," added he, turning his eyes steadily on her face, "was the Knight of the Green Plume! —You are all acquainted with the manner of his introduction to me at Linlithgow; you all know, by the account that he then gave of himself, as much of him as I did, till on the night that he left me at Berwick,—and then I found him—like this story of Lady Strathearn, all a fable."

"What is his proper title?—Name him, on your knighthood!" exclaimed Buchan; "for yet he shall be brought, to support the veracity of my illustrious kinswoman, and fully to unmask his insidious accomplice!"

"Your kinswoman, Earl Buchan," replied Wallace, "can best answer your question."

Lord Athol approached the Regent, and whispering something in his ear, this unworthy representative of the generous

Bruce rose from his seat, and said, " Sir William Wallace, you have replied to the questions of Lord Loch-awe; but where are your witnesses, to prove that what you have spoken is the truth?"

Wallace, for a moment, was struck with surprise at the tone and words of this address from a man whom, whatever might be demanded of him in the fulfilment of his office, he had believed to be his friend; and, by the confidence reposed in him, both by Bruce and himself, fully aware of the impossiblity of these allegations being true. But Wallace now saw with an eye, that pierced through the souls of the whole assembly; and with collected firmness, he replied;—" My witnesses, are in the bosom of every Scotsman."

" I cannot find them in mine:" interrupted Athol.—" Nor in mine!" was echoed from various parts of the hall.

" Invalidate the facts, brought against you, by something more than this rhetori-

cal appeal;" added the Regent; "else, I fear, the sentence of the law must be passed on so tacit an acknowledgment of guilt."

"Acknowledgment of guilt!" cried Wallace, with a flush of godlike indignation suffusing his noble brow: "If any one of the chieftains who have just spoken, knew the beat of an honest heart, they would not have declared, that they heard no voice proclaim the integrity of William Wallace. Let them, then, recollect the Carse of Stirling, where I refused the crown, which my accuser alledges I would yet obtain by blood. Let them remember the banks of the Clyde, where I rejected the Scottish throne offered me by Edward! Let these facts bear witness for me; and if they be insufficient, look on Scotland, now, for the third time, rescued by my arm from the grasp of an usurper, and made entirely free!—That scroll, locks the door of the kingdom upon her ene-

mies." As he spoke, he threw the capitulation of Berwick upon the table. It struck a pause, into the minds of the lords; they gazed with pallid countenances, and without a word, on the parchment where it lay, and he proceeded—" If my actions, that you see, do not convince you of my integrity, then believe the unsupported evidence of words, the tale of a woman,—whose mystery, were it not for the memory of the honourable man whose name she once bore, I would publicly unravel:—believe her; and leave Wallace nought of his country to remember, but that he has served it, and that it is unjust!"

" Noblest of Scots!" cried Loch-awe coming towards him, " did your accuser come in the shape of an angel of light, still we should believe your life, in preference to her testimony, for God himself, speaks on your side: *My servants*, he declares, *shall be known by their fruits!* And have not yours, been peace to Scot-

land, and good will to all men!" "They are the labyrinthian folds of his hypocrisy!" cried Athol, alarmed at the awe-struck looks of the assembly. "They are the baits, by which he cheats fools!" re-echoed Soulis. "They are snares, which shall catch us no more!" was now the general exclamation; and in proportion to the transitory respect, which had made them bow, though but for a moment, to virtue—they now vociferated their contempt, both of Wallace, and this his last achievement. Kirkpatrick inflamed with rage, first at the manifest determination to misjudge his commander, and then at the contumely with which their envy affected to treat him, threw off all restraint, and with the bitterness of his reproaches, still more incensed the jealousy of the nobles, and augmented the tumult. Lennox, vainly attempting to make himself heard, drew towards Wallace; hoping by that movement, at least to shew, on whose side he thought justice

lay. At this moment, while the uproar raged with redoubled clamour, demanding that sentence should instantly be passed on the traitor, the door burst open, and Bothwell, covered with dust, and followed by a throng of armed knights, rushed into the centre of the hall.

"Who is it you arraign?" cried the young chief, looking indignantly around him: "Is it not your deliverer, you would destroy. The Romans could not accuse the guilty Manilius, in sight of the capitol he had preserved; but you, worse than heathens, bring your benefactor to the scene of his victories, and there condemn him for serving you too well! Has he not plucked you, this third time, out of the furnace that would have consumed you? And yet, in this hour, you would sacrifice him to the disappointed passions of a woman! Falsest of thy sex!" cried he, turning to the Countess, who shrunk before the penetrating eyes of Andrew Murray;—"Do I not know

thee? Have I not read thine unfeminine, thy vindictive heart? You would destroy the man, you could not seduce! Wallace!" cried he, "speak; would not this woman have persuaded you to disgrace the name of Mar? When my uncle died, did she not urge you, to intrigue for that crown, which she knew you had so loyally declined?" "My errand here," answered Wallace, "is to defend myself, not to accuse others. I have shewn that I am innocent, and my judges will not look on the proofs. They obey not the laws in their judgment; and whatever may be the decree, I shall not acknowledge its authority." As he spoke, he turned away, and walked with a firm step out of the hall.

His disappearance gave the signal for a tumult, more threatening to the welfare of the state, than if the armies of Edward had been in the midst of them. It was brother against brother, and friend against friend. The lords Len-

nox and Loch-awe were vehement against the unfairness with which Sir William Wallace had been treated. Kirkpatrick declared, that no arguments could be used with men so devoid of reason; and words of reproach and reviling passing between him and Athol, and others, swords were fiercely drawn. And while Bothwell was loudly denouncing the Regent, for having allowed any examination of the ever faithful champion of Scotland, Lady Strathearn, seeing herself neglected, and fearful that the party of Wallace might at last gain the ascendency, fainted away, and was carried out of the assembly.

CHAP. VI.

THE Regent, having with difficulty interrupted the mortal attack, which the enemies and friends of Wallace made on each other; saw with satisfaction (although several of the Cummins were maimed, and Lord Athol himself severely wounded by Kirkpatrick) that none were hurt unto death. With horrid menaces, the two parties separated; the one, to the Regent's apartments; the other, to the camp of Wallace.

Lord Bothwell found his friend on the platform before his tent, trying to allay the storm which was raging in the bosoms of his followers, against the injustice of the Regent, and the ingratitude of the Scottish lords. At sight of Lord Bothwell, their clamour to be led instantly

to revenge the indignity offered to their general, redoubled; and Murray, not less incensed, turning to them, said, "My friends, keep quiet for a few hours, and then, what honour commands, we will do." At this assurance they retired to their quarters; and Bothwell entered with Wallace and Edwin into the tent.

"Before you utter a word concerning the present scenes," cried Wallace, "tell me how is the hope of Scotland, the only earthly stiller of these horrid tumults?" "He is ill;" replied Bothwell; "after regaining, by a valour worthy of his destiny, every fortress north of the Forth. As his last, and greatest achievement, he made himself master of Scone; but in storming its walls, received another wound on his head; and next day was attacked by so violent a fever, that he now lies at Hunting tower, reduced to infant weakness. All this you would have known, had you received his letters;

but doubtless, villany has been here too; for none of yours have reached his hands." This intelligence respecting Bruce, was a more mortal blow to Wallace, than all that he had just sustained in his own person. He remained silent, but his mind was thronged with thoughts. —Was Scotland to be indeed lost?—Was all that he had suffered, and achieved, to have been done in vain; and should he be fated to behold her, again made a sacrifice to the jealousy of her contending nobles?

Bothwell continued to speak of the prince; and added, that it was with pain he left him, even to share the anticipated success at Berwick. But Bruce, impatient to learn the issue of the siege (for still no letters arrived from that quarter,) dispatched him back to the borders.—At Dumfermling, he was stricken with horror by the information that treason had been alledged against Wallace; and now no longer regretting his

hastened return, he turned his steps westward; and flew to give that support to his friend's innocence, which the malignity of his enemies might render needful.

"The moment I heard how you were beset," continued Bothwell, "I dispatched a messenger to Lord Ruthven, to tell him, not to alarm Bruce with such tidings, but to bring all the spare forces in Perthshire, to maintain your honour and rights." "No force, my dear Bothwell, must be used to hold me in a power, which will only keep alive a spirit of discord in my country. If I dare apply the words of my Divine Master, I would say, *I came not to bring a sword, but peace to the people of Scotland!* Then, if they are weary of me, let me go. Bruce will recover; they will rally round his standard, and all will be well." "Oh, Wallace! Wallace!" cried Bothwell; "the scene I have this day witnessed, is enough to make a traitor of me. I

could forswear my insensible country; I could immolate its ungrateful chieftains on those very lands, which your generous arm restored to these worthless men!" He threw himself into a seat, and leaned his burning forehead against his hand.—"Cousin, you declare my sentiments;" rejoined Edwin; "my soul can never again associate with these sons of Envy. I cannot recognise a countryman in one of them; and should Sir William Wallace quit a land so unworthy of his virtues, where he goes, I will go; his asylum shall be my country, and Edwin Ruthven will forget that he ever was a Scot."

"Never;" cried Wallace, turning on him one of those looks which struck conviction into the heart; "*Is man more just than God?* Though a thousand of your countrymen offend you by their crimes, yet, while there remains one honest Scot, for his sake, and his posterity, it is your duty to be a patriot. A nation is one great family; and every individual in it, is as much

bound to promote the general good, as a son or a father is, to maintain the welfare of his nearest kindred. And if the transgression of one brother, be no excuse for the omission of another; in like manner, the ruin these turbulent lords would bring upon Scotland, is no excuse for your desertion of its interest. I would not leave the helm of my country, did she not thrust me from it; but, though cast by her into the waves, would you not blush for your friend, should he wish her other than a peaceful haven?" Edwin spoke not, but putting the hand of Wallace to his lips, left the tent. "Oh!" cried Bothwell, looking after him, "that the breast of woman, had but half that boy's tenderness! And yet, all of that dangerous sex, are not like this hyena-hearted Lady Strathearn. Tell me, my friend, did she not, when she disappeared so strangely from Hunting tower, fly to you? I now suspect, from certain remembrances, that she and the Green Knight are one and the

same person. Acknowledge it, and I will unveil her at once to the court she has deceived." "She has deceived no one;" replied Wallace; "before she spoke, the members of that court were determined to brand me with guilt; and her charge, merely supplied the place of others, which, they would have devised against me. Whatever she may be, my dear Bothwell, for the sake of him whose name she once bore, let us not expose her to open shame. Her love, or her hatred, are alike indifferent to me now; for, to neither of them do I owe that innate malice of my countrymen, which has only made her calumny the occasion of manifesting their resolution to make me infamous. But that, my friend, is beyond their compass.—I have done my duty to Scotland; and that conviction must live in every honest heart; ay, and with the dishonest too; for did they not fear my integrity, they would not have thought it necessary to deprive me of power. Heaven shield our prince;—I

dread that Badenoch's next shaft may be at him!" "No," cried Bothwell, "all is levelled at his best friend. In a low voice, I accused the Regent of disloyalty in permitting this outrage on you; and his basely envious answer was: *Wallace's removal is Bruce's security: Who will acknowledge him, when they know that this man is his dictator?*" Wallace sighed at this reply; but it confirmed him in his resolution; and he told Bothwell, that he saw no alternative, if he wished to still the agitations of his country, and preserve its prince from premature discovery, but for him to indeed remove the subject of all those contentions from their sight. "Attempt it not!" exclaimed Bothwell; "propose but a step towards that end, and you will determine me to avenge my country, at the peril of my own life, on all that accursed assembly, who have menaced yours!" In short, the young earl's denunciations were so vehement, and in earnest, against the lords in Stirling, that

Wallace, thinking it dangerous to exasperate him farther, consented to remain in his camp, till the arrival of Ruthven should bring him the advantage of his counsel.

The issue shewed that Bothwell was not mistaken. The majority of the Scottish nobles envied Wallace his glory, and hated him for that virtue which drew the eyes of the people to compare him with their vicious courses. The Regent, hoping to become the first in Bruce's favour, was not less urgent to ruin the man, who was, at present, the highest in that prince's esteem. He had therefore entered warmly into the project of Lady Strathearn; but when, during a secret conference between them, previous to her open charge of Wallace, she named Sir Thomas de Longueville as one of his foreign emissaries, Cummin observed, "If you would have your accusation succeed, do not name that knight at all. He is my friend. He is now ill near Perth, and must know nothing of this affair till it be over. Should

he live, he will nobly thank you for your forbearance; should he die, I will repay you as becomes your nearest kinsman."

All were thus united in one determined effort, to hurl Wallace from his station in the state.—And that, they believed done, they quarrelled amongst themselves, in diciding who was to fill the great military office which his prowess had rendered a post, rather of honour, than of danger.

In the midst of these feuds, Sir Simon Fraser suddenly appeared in the council-hall. His countenance proclaimed his tidings. Lennox and Loch-awe, (who duly attended, in hopes of bringing over some of the more pliable chiefs, to embrace the cause of Wallace;) listened, with something like exultation, to most disastrous information. When the English governor learnt the removal of Wallace from the command at Berwick, and the consequent consternation of the Scottish troops, instead of surrendering at sunset as was expected, he sallied out at the head

of the whole garrison, and taking the Scots by surprise, gave them a total defeat. Every outpost around the town, was re-taken by the Southrons; the army of Fraser was cut to pieces, or put to flight; and himself now arrived in Stirling, smarting with many a wound, but more under his dishonour, to shew to the Regent of Scotland, the evil of having superseded the only man whom the enemy feared. The council stood in silence, staring on each other: and to add to their dismay, Fraser had hardly ended his narration, before a messenger from Tiviot dale arrived in breathless haste, to inform the Regent, that King Edward was himself within a few miles of the Cheviots, and must have, even now, poured his thousands over those hills upon the plains beneath. While all in the citadel was indecision, tumult, and alarm, Lennox hastened to Wallace's camp with the news.

Lord Ruthven, and the Perthshire chieftains, were already there. They had ar-

rived early in the morning, with most unpromising tidings of Bruce. The state of his wound had induced a constant delirium.—But still Wallace clung to the hope, that his country was not doomed to perish; that its prince's recovery was only protracted. In the midst of this anxiety, Lennox entered; and relating what he had just heard, turned the whole current of his auditor's ideas. Wallace started from his seat. His hand mechanically caught up his sword, which lay upon the table; and looking around at these words of Lennox: "There is not a man in the citadel, who does not appear at his wit's end, and incapable of facing this often-beaten foe; will you, Wallace, again condescend to save a country, that has treated you so ungratefully?" "I would die in its trenches!" cried the chief, with a generous forgiveness of all his injuries, suffusing his magnanimous heart.

Lord Loch-awe soon after appeared;

and corroborating the testimony of Lennox, added, that on the Regent's sending word to the troops on the south of Stirling, that, in consequence of the treason of Sir William Wallace, the supreme command was taken from him: and they must immediately march out under the orders of Sir Simon Fraser, to face a new incursion of the enemy; they began to murmur among themselves: and saying, that since Wallace was found a traitor, they knew not whom to trust, but that certainly it should not be a beaten general; they slid away from their standards; and when Loch-awe left them, were dispersing on all sides, like an already discomfited army.

CHAP. VII.

FOR a day or two, the paralyzed terrors of the people, and the tumults in the citadel, were portentous of immediate ruin. A large detachment from the royal army, had entered Scotland by the marine gate of Berwick; and, headed by De Warenne, was advancing rapidly towards Edinburgh. Not a soldier belonging to the regency, remained on the Carse; and the distant chieftains, to whom he sent for aid, refused it, saying, that the discovery of Wallace's patriotism having been a delusion, had made them suspect all men; and that locking themselves within their own castles, each true Scot would there securely view a struggle, in which they could feel no personal interest.

Seeing the danger of the realm, and

hearing from the lords Ruthven and Bothwell, that their troops would follow no other leader than Sir William Wallace, the Regent, hopeless of any prompt decision from amongst the confusion of his council, and urged by time-serving Buchan, yielded a tacit assent to the only apparent means of saving his sinking country. He turned ashy pale, as his silence granted to Lord Loch-awe, the necessity of imploring Sir William Wallace, again to stretch out his arm in their behalf. With this embassy, the venerable chieftain returned exultingly to Balloch-geich; and the so lately branded Wallace, branded as the intended betrayer of Scotland, was solicited, by his very accusers, to assume the trust of being their sole defence.

"Such is the triumph of virtue!" whispered Edwin to his friend, as he vaulted on his horse. A luminous smile from Wallace, acknowledged that he felt the tribute; and looking up to heaven ere he

placed his helmet on his head, he said, "Thence comes my power; and the satisfaction it brings, whether attended by man's applause, or his blame, he cannot take from me. I now, perhaps for the last time, arm this head for Scotland: may the God in whom I trust, again crown it with victory, and for ever after bind the brows of our rightful sovereign with peace!"

While Wallace pursued his march, the Regent, confounded at the turn which events had taken, and hardly knowing whether to make another essay to collect forces for the support of their former leader, or to follow the refractory councils of his lords and await in inactivity the issue of the expected battle, was quite at a stand. He knew not how to act: but a letter from Lady Strathearn decided him.

Though partly triumphant in her charges, yet the accusations of Bothwell had disconcerted her; and the restoration

of Wallace to his undisputed authority in the state, seemed to her so probable, that she resolved to take an immediate step, which would confirm her influence over the discontented of her country, and most likely insure the vengeance, she panted to bring upon Wallace's head. To this end, on the very evening that she was carried swooning from the council-hall, she set forward to the borders; and easily passing thence to the English camp (then pitched at Alnwick) was soon admitted to the castle where De Warenne was lodged. She was too well taught in the school of vanity, not to have remarked the admiration with which that earl had regarded her while he was a prisoner in Stirling; and hoping that he might not be able to withstand the persuasions of her charms, she opened her mission, with no less art than effect. De Warenne understood from her, that Wallace, on the strength of a passion he had conceived for her, and which she treated with dis-

dain, had repented of his former refusals of the crown of Scotland; and under a belief, that she would not repeat her rejection of his hand, when it could offer her a sceptre, was now attempting to compass that dignity, by the most complicated intrigues. She then related how, at her instigation, the Regent had deposed him from his military command; and she ended, with saying, that impelled by loyalty to Edward, (whom her better reason now recognised as the lawful sovereign of her country,) she had come to exhort that monarch, immediately to renew his invasion of the kingdom. De Warenne, intoxicated with her beauty; and enraptured by a manner, which seemed to tell him, that a softer sentiment than usual, had made her select him as her embassador to the King, greedily drank in all her words: and ere he allowed the conference to break up, had thrown himself at her feet, and implored her, by every impassioned argument, to grant him the pri-

vilege of presenting her to Edward as his intended bride. De Warenne was in the meridian of life; and being fraught with a power at court, beyond all other of his peers, she determined to accept his hand; and wield her new influence to the destruction of Wallace, even should she be compelled, in that act, to precipitate her country in his fall. De Warenne drew from her, a half reluctant consent: and while he poured forth the transports of a happy lover, he was not so much enamoured of the fine person of Lady Strathearn, as to be altogether insensible to the advantages which his alliance with her, would give to Edward in his Scottish pretensions. And as it would consequently increase his own importance with that monarch, he lost no time in communicating the circumstance to him. Edward, who suspected something in this sudden attachment of the Countess, which, if known, might cool the ardour of his officer for uniting so useful an agent to his cause,

highly approved De Warenne's conduct in the affair; and to hasten the nuptials, proposed being present at their solemnization that very evening. The vows which Lady Strathearn pledged at the altar to De Warenne, were pronounced by her, as those by which she swore to complete her revenge on Wallace; and by depriving him of life, prevent the climax to her misery, of seeing him (what she believed he intended to become) the husband of Helen Mar. The day after she became De Warenne's wife,(e) she accompanied him, attended by a retinue correspondent to his rank as Lord Warden of Scotland, by sea to Berwick; and from that place she dispatched messengers to the Regent, and other nobles, her kinsmen, fraught with promises, which Edward, in the event of success, had solemnly pledged himself to ratify. Her embassador arrived at Stirling, the day succeeding that in which Wallace and his troops marched from Ballochgeich. The letters he brought,

were eagerly opened by Badenoch and his chieftains; and they found their contents to this effect. She announced to them her marriage with the Lord Warden, who was then at the head of a mighty force, determined on the subjugation of the country; and therefore besought the Regent, and his council, not to raise a hostile arm against him, if they would, not merely escape the indignation of a great king, but ensure his favour. She cast out hints to Badenoch, as if Edward meant to reward his acquiescence with the crown of Scotland: and with similar baits, proportioned to the views of all her other kinsmen, she smoothed their anger against that monarch's former insults; and persuaded them, at least to remain inactive, during the last struggle of their country.

Meanwhile, Wallace taking his course along the banks of the Forth; as the night drew near, encamped his little army at the base of the craigs east of Edinburgh

castle. His march having been long and rapid, the men were much fatigued; and now, were hardly laid upon their hether beds, before they fell asleep. Wallace, gained information from his scouts, that the main body of the Southrons had approached within a few miles of Dalkeith. Thither he hoped to go next morning; and there, he trusted, strike the conclusive blow for Scotland, by the destruction of a division, which he understood comprised the flower of the English army. With these expectations, he gladly saw his troops lying in that repose, which would re-brace their strength for the combat; and as the hours of night stole on, while his possessed mind waked for all around, he was pleased to see his ever-watchful Edwin sink down in a profound sleep.

It was Wallace's custom, once at least in the night, to go himself the rounds of his posts, to see that all was safe. The air was serene, and he walked out on this duty.—He passed from line to line, from

station to station, and all was in order. One post alone, remained to be visited; and that was placed, as a point of observation, on the craigs near Arthur's seat. As he proceeded along a lonely defile between the rocks which over-hang the ascent of the mountain, he was startled by the indistinct sight of a figure amongst the rolling vapours of the night, seated on a towering cliff, directly in the way he was to go. The broad light of the moon, breaking from behind the clouds, shone full upon the spot, and discovered a majestic form in grey robes, leaning on a harp, while his face, mournfully gazing upward, was rendered venerable by a long white beard that mingled with the floating mist. Wallace paused, and stopping at some distance from this extraordinary apparition, looked on it in silence. The strings of the harp were softly touched; but it was only the sighing of a passing breeze which had agitated them. The vibration ceased, and the next moment the hand of the master

struck their chords with so full and melancholy a sound, that Wallace was for a few minutes rivetted to the ground; and then moving forward with a stilly step, that he might not disturb the nocturnal bard, he gently approached. At sight of him, the harp seemed to fall from before the venerable figure, and clasping his hands, in a voice of mournful solemnity he exclaimed, "Art thou come, doomed of Heaven, to hear thy sad coronach?" Wallace started at this salutation. The bard with the same emotion continued; "No choral hymns hallow thy bleeding corse;—wolves howl thy requiem; eagles scream over thy desolate grave: fly, chieftain, fly!" "What venerable father of the harp," cried Wallace, interrupting the awful pause, "thus addresses one, whom he must mistake for some other chief?" "Can the spirit of inspiration, mistake its object?" demanded the bard. —"Can he, whose eyes have been opened by the touch of fate, be blind to Sir

William Wallace; to the blood which clogs his mounting footsteps?" "And who, am I to understand that you are?" replied Wallace. "Who is the saint, whose holy charity would anticipate the obsequies of a man, who yet may be destined to a long pilgrimage?" "Who I am," resumed the bard, "will be shewn to thee, when thou has past yon starry firmament. But the galaxy streams with blood—the bugle of death is alone heard—and thy lacerated breast, heaves in vain against the hoofs of opposing squadrons. They charge—Scotland falls! Look not on me thus, champion of thy country! Sold by thy enemies, betrayed by thy friends! It was not the seer of St. Anton, who gave thee these wounds—that heart's blood was not drawn by me—a woman's hand in mail—ten thousand armed warriors strike the mortal steel—he sinks—he falls! Red is the blood of Eske!—Thy vital stream hath dyed it. Fly, bravest of the brave, or perish!"

With a shriek of horror, and throwing his aged arms extended towards the heavens, while his grey beard mingled in the rising blast, he rushed from the sight of Wallace, and left him in awful solitude.

For a few minutes, he stood in profound silence. His very soul seemed deprived of the power to answer so terrible a denunciation, with even a questioning thought. He had heard the destruction of Scotland declared; and himself sentenced to perish, if he did not escape the general ruin, by flying from her side! This terrible decree of fate, so disastrously corroborated by the extremity of Bruce, and the divisions in the kingdom, had been sounded in his ear; had been pronounced by one of those sages of his country, on whom the spirit of prophecy yet descended with all the horrors of a woe-denouncing trumpet. Could he then doubt its truth? He did not doubt; he believed the midnight voice he had heard. But recovering from the first shock of

such a doom; and remembering, that it still left the choice to himself, between dishonoured life, or glorious death; he resolves to shew his respect to the oracle, by manifesting a persevering obedience to the eternal voice, which gives all these his agents utterance; and while he bows to the warning, he starts forward to be the last who shall fall from the side of his devoted country. "If devoted," cried he, "then our fates shall be the same. My fall from thee, shall be into my grave. Scotland, may have struck the breast that shielded her; yet, Father of Mercies, forgive her blindness; and grant me still permission, a little longer to oppose my heart between her and this fearful doom!"(f)

CHAP. VIII.

AWED, but not intimidated by the prophecy of the seer, Wallace next day drew up his army in order for the new battle, near a convent of Cistertian monks, on the narrow plain of Dalkeith. The two rivers Eske flowed on each side of his little phalanx, and formed a temporary barrier between it and the pressing legions of De Warenne. The earl's troops seemed countless: and the Southron lords who led them on, being elated by the representations which the Countess had given them, of the disunited state of the Scottish army, and of the consequent dismay which had seized their hitherto all-conquering commander, bore down upon the Scots with an impetuosity which threatened their universal destruction. De Wa-

renne, deceived by the blandishing falsehoods of his bride, had entirely changed his former opinion of his brave opponent; and by her sophistries, having brought his mind to adopt stratagems unworthy of his nobleness; (so contagious is baseness, in too fond a contact with the unprincipled!) he placed himself on an adjoining height; from that situation, intending to give his orders, and behold his victory. "Soldiers!" cried he, as he gave the word of command, "the rebel's hour is come.— The sentence of Heaven is gone forth against him. Charge resolutely, and he, and his host are yours!"

The sky was obscured: an awful stillness reigned through the air; and the spirits of the mighty dead, seemed leaning from their clouds, to witness this last struggle of their sons. Fate did indeed hover over the opposing armies. She descended on the head of Wallace, and dictated from amidst his waving plumes. She pointed his spear, she wielded his flaming sword,

she charged with him in the dreadful shock of battle. De Warenne saw his foremost thousands fall. He heard the shout of the Scots, the cries of his men—and the plains of Stirling rose to his remembrance. He hastily ordered the knights around him, to bear his wife from the field; and descending the hill, to lead forward himself, was met, and almost overwhelmed, by his flying troops: horses without riders, men without shield or sword, but all in dismay, rushed past him. He called to them, he waved the royal standard, he urged, he reproached; he rallied, and led them back again. The fight re-commenced.—Long and bloody was the conflict. De Warenne fought for conquest, and to recover a lost reputation. Wallace contended for his country; and to shew himself always worthy of her latest sigh, *before he should go hence, and be no more seen!*

The issue declared for Scotland. But the ground was covered with the slain;

and Wallace chased a wounded foe, with troops which dropped as they pursued. At sight of the melancholy state of his intrepid soldiers, he tried to check their ardour, but in vain. "It is for Wallace that we conquer!" cried they, "and we will die, or prove him the only captain in this ungrateful country."

Night compelled them to halt; and under her shades, while they yet only rested on their arms, Wallace, satisfied that he had destroyed the power of De Warenne, forbore to press too hard upon its remnant; and as he leaned on his sword, and stood with Edwin near the watch-fire over which that youthful hero kept a guard, he contemplated, with generous forbearance, the terrified Southrons as they fled precipitately, by the foot of the hill, towards the Tweed. Wallace now told his friend, the history of his adventure with the seer of the craigs; and finding within himself, how much the brightness of true religion excludes the glooms of supersti-

tion, he added: "The proof of prophecy is its completion!—Hence let the false seer I met last night, warn you, my Edwin, by my example, how you give credit to any prediction that might slacken the sinews of duty. God can speak but one language. He is not a man, that he should repent; neither a mortal, that he should change his purpose!—This prophet of Baal, beguiled me into a belief of his denunciation; but not to adopt the conduct, his offered alternative would have persuaded me to pursue. I now see, that he was a traitor in both; and henceforth shall read my fate in the oracles of God alone. Obeying them, my Edwin, we need not fear the curses of our enemy, nor the lying of suborned soothsayers."

The splendour of this victory, struck to the souls of the council at Stirling. Scotland being again rescued from the vengeance of her implacable foe, the lords in the citadel, spurned at their preservation; and declared to the Regent, that

they would rather bear the yoke of the veriest tyrant in the world, than owe a moment of freedom to the man, who, (they affected to believe) had conspired against their lives. And they had a weighty reason for this decision. Though De Warenne was beaten, his wife was a victor. She had made Edward triumphant, in the venal hearts of her kinsmen: gold, and her persuasions, with promises of future honours from the King of England, made them entirely his. All, but the Regent, were ready to commit every thing into the hands of Edward: he doubted.—The rising favour of other lords with the court of England, induced him to recollect, that he might rule as the unrivalled friend of Bruce, should that prince live; or, in case of his death, have it in his own power, to assume the Scottish throne untrammelled. These thoughts made him fluctuate; and his country found him as undetermined in treason, as unstable in fidelity.

Immediately on the victory at Dalkeith, Kirkpatrick (eager to be the first communicator of such welcome news to Lennox, who had planted himself as a watch at Stirling) withdrew secretly from Wallace's camp; and hoping to move the gratitude of the refractory lords, entered, full of honest joy, into the midst of their council. He proclaimed the success of his commander. His answer was accusations and insult. All that had been charged against the too fortunate Wallace, was re-urged with added acrimony. Treachery to the state, hypocrisy in morals, fanaticism in religion; no stigma was too extravagant, too contradictory, to be affixed to his name. They who had been hurt in the fray in the hall, pointed to their still smarting wounds, and called upon Lennox to say, if they did not plead against so dangerous a man? "Dangerous to your crimes, and ruinous to your ambition!" cried Kirkpatrick; "for, so help me God, as I believe that an honester man than

William Wallace, lives not in Scotland! And that ye know:—and his virtues overtopping your littleness, ye would uproot the greatness which ye cannot equal!" This speech, which a burst of indignation had wrested from him, brought down the wrath of the whole party upon himself. Lord Athol, yet stung with his old wound, furiously struck him:—Kirkpatrick drew his sword, and the two chiefs commenced a furious combat, each determined on the extirpation of the other. Gasping with almost the last breathings of life, neither could be torn from their desperate revenge, till many were hurt in attempting to separate them; and then the two were carried off, insensible, and covered with wounds.

When this sad news was transmitted, by Lennox, to Sir William Wallace, it found him on the banks of the Eske, just returned from the citadel of Berwick, where, once more master of that fortress,

he had dictated the terms of a conqueror and a patriot.

In the scene of his former victories, the romantic shades of Hawthorndean, he pitched his triumphant camp; and from its verdant bounds, dispatched the requisite orders to the garrisoned castles on the borders. While employed in this duty, his heart was wrung by an account of the newly aroused storm in the citadel of Stirling: but as some alleviation of his pangs, the chieftains of Mid-Lothian poured in to him on every side; and acknowledging him their protector, he again found himself the idol of gratitude, and the almost deified object of trust. At such a moment, when with one voice they were disclaiming all participation in the insurgent proceedings at Stirling, another messenger arrived from Lennox, to conjure Wallace, if he would avoid open violence, or secret treachery, to march his victorious troops immediately to that city;

and seize the assembled abthanes at once, as traitors to their country. " Resume the Regency," added he, " which you only, know how to conduct; and crush a treason, which, increasing hourly, now walks openly in the day, threatening all that is virtuous, or faithful to you !"

He did not hesitate to decide against this counsel; for, in following it, it would not be one adversary he must strike, but thousands. " I am only a brother, to my countrymen ;" said he to himself; " and have no right to force them to their duty: when their king appears, then these rebellious heads may be made to bow."—While he mused upon the letter of Lennox, Ruthven entered the recess of the tent, whither Wallace had retired to read it.—" I bring you better news of our friend at Hunting tower;" cried the good lord; " here is a packet from Douglas, and another from my wife.—" Wallace, gladly read them, and found, that Bruce was relieved from his delirium; but so

weak, that his friends had not hazarded a relapse, by imparting to him any idea of the proceedings at Stirling: all he knew was, that Wallace was victorious in arms; and panting for his recovery, to render such success, really beneficial to his country. Helen and Isabella, and the sage of Ercildown, were the prince's unwearied attendants; and though his life was yet in extreme peril, it was to be hoped that their attentions, and his own constitution, would finally cure the wound, and conquer its attendant fever. Comforted with these tidings, Wallace declared his intentions of visiting his suffering friend, as soon as he could establish any principle in the minds of his followers, to induce them to bear, even for a little time, with the insolence of the abthanes. "I will then," said he, "watch by the side of our beloved Bruce, till his recovered health will allow him safely to proclaim himself king; and with that act, I trust, all these feuds will be for ever laid to

sleep!" Ruthven participated in these hopes; and the friends returned, together, into the council-tent. But all there was changed. Most of the Lothian chieftains, had also received packets from their friends in Stirling. Allegations against Wallace: arguments to prove the policy of submitting themselves, and their properties, to the protection of a great king, though a foreigner; rather than to risk all, by attaching themselves to the fortune of a private person, who made their services, the ladder of his ambition; were the contents of these packets: and they were sufficient to shake the easy faith to which they were addressed. The chieftains, on the re-entrance of Wallace, stole suspicious glances at each other, and without a word, glided severally out of the tent.

CHAP. IX.

NEXT morning, instead of coming as usual, directly to their acknowledged protector, the Lothian chieftains were seen at different parts of the camp, closely conversing in groups; and when any of Wallace's officers approached, they separated, or withdrew to a greater distance. This strange conduct, Wallace attributed to its right source; and thought of Bruce with a sigh, when he contemplated the variable substance of these men's minds. Lord Sinclair alone, kept unalterably firm to his faith in the victor of Roslyn. His venerable brother, was not yet returned from Rome, to give power, by his councils, to the fidelity of Sinclair; and that chief, was so confounded by the hatred which the majority of his peers manifest-

ed to Wallace, that, though attached to his person, he could not but abandon the hope, that the liberty he had given to Scotland, would be accepted by those haughty lords. Wallace was so convinced, that nothing but the proclamation of Bruce, and that prince's personal exertions, could preserve his country from falling again into the snare, from which he had just snatched it, that he was preparing, immediately, to set out for Perthshire with such persuasions, when Ker hastily entered his tent. He was followed by the Lord Soulis, Lord Buchan, and several other chieftains of equally hostile intentions. Soulis did not hesitate to declare his errand.

"We come, Sir William Wallace, by the command of the Regent, and the assembled abthanes of Scotland, to take these brave troops, which have performed such good service to their country, from the power of a man, who, we have every reason to believe, means to turn their

arms against the liberties of the realm. Without a pardon from the states, without the signature of the Regent; in contempt of the court, which, having found you guilty of high treason, had in mercy delayed to pronounce sentence on your crime, you have presumed to place yourself at the head of the national troops, and to take to yourself the merit of a victory won by their prowess alone! Your designs are known; and the authority you have despised, is now roused to punish. You are to accompany me this day to Stirling. I have brought a guard of four thousand men, to compel your obedience."

Before the indignant spirit of Wallace, could utter the answer his wrongs dictated; Bothwell, who, at sight of the Regent's troops, had hastened to his general's tent, entered, followed by his chieftains.—"Were your guard, forty thousand, instead of four;" cried he; "they should not force our commander from us; they should not extinguish the glory of

Scotland, beneath the murderous devices of hell-engendered envy and cowardice!" Soulis turned on him with eyes of fire, and laid his hand on his sword. "Ay, cowardice!" reiterated Bothwell; "the midnight ravisher, the slanderer of virtue, the betrayer of his country, knows in his heart, that he fears to draw aught but the assassin's steel. He dreads the sceptre of honour:—Wallace must fall, that vice and her votaries may reign without controul in Scotland. A thousand brave Scots lie under these sods, and a thousand yet survive, who may share their graves, but never will relinquish their invincible leader into the hands of traitors!"

The clamours of the citadel of Stirling, now resounded through the tent of Wallace. Invectives, accusations, threatenings, reproaches, and revilings, joined in one turbulent uproar. Again swords were drawn; and Wallace, in attempting to beat down the weapons of Soulis and Buchan, aimed at Bothwell's heart, must

have received the point of Soulis in his own body, had he not grasped the blade, and wrenching it out of the chieftain's hand, broke it into shivers; "Such be the fate of every sword, which Scot draws against Scot!" cried he. "Put up your weapons my friends.—The arm of Wallace is not shrunk, that he could not defend himself, did he think that violence were necessary. Hear my determination, once, and for ever!" added he; "I acknowledge no authority in Scotland, but the laws. The present Regent, and his abthanes, outrage them in every ordinance; and I should indeed be a traitor to my country, did I submit to such men's behests. I shall not obey their summons to Stirling—neither will I permit a hostile arm to be raised in this camp against their delegates, unless the violence begins with them.—This is my answer."—Uttering these words, he motioned Bothwell to follow him, and left the tent.

Crossing a little bridge which lay over the Eske, to the quarters of Ruthven, he met that nobleman, accompanied by Edwin, and Lord Sinclair. He came to inform Wallace, that embassadors from Edward awaited his presence at Roslyn. "They come to offer peace to our distracted country," cried Sinclair. "Then," answered he, "I shall not delay a moment, going where I may hear the terms." Horses were brought, and during their short ride; to prevent the impassioned representations of the still raging Bothwell; Wallace communicated to his not less indignant friends, the particulars of the scene he had left. "These contentions must be terminated," added he; "and with God's blessing, a few days, perhaps hours, and they shall be so!" "Heaven grant it!" returned Sinclair, thinking he referred to the proposed negociation: "If Edward's offers be at all reasonable, I would urge you to accept them; otherwise, invasion from without,

and civil commotion within, will probably make a desert of poor Scotland." Ruthven interrupted him: "Despair not, my lord! Whatever be the fate of this embassy, let us remember, that it is our steadiest friend who decides; and that his arm is still with us, to repel invasion, and to chastise treason!" Edwin's eyes turned with a direful expression upon Wallace, and he lowly murmured, "Treason! hydra treason!" Wallace understood him, and answered; "Grievous are the alternatives, my friends, which your love for me would persuade you even to welcome. But that which I shall chuse, will, I trust, indeed lay the land at peace;—or point its hostilities to the only aim, against which a true Scot ought to direct its fires!"

Being arrived at the gate of Roslyn, Wallace, regardless of those ceremonials, which often impede the business they pretend to dignify, entered at once into the hall where the embassadors sat. Baron

Hilton was one, and Le de Spencer (father to the young and violent envoy of that name) was the other. At sight of the Scottish chief, they rose; and Wallace, having graciously recognised Hilton, the good baron, believing he came on a propitious errand, smiling, said, "Sir William Wallace, it is your private ear I am commanded to seek." As he spoke, he looked round on Sinclair and the other lords. "These chieftains are as myself;" replied Wallace; "but I will not impede your embassy, by crossing the wishes of your master in a trifle." He then turned to his friends; "Indulge the monarch of England in making me the first acquainted with that which can only be a message to the whole nation."

The chiefs withdrew; and Hilton, without further parley, opened his mission.—He said, that King Edward, more than ever impressed with the wondrous military talents of Sir William Wallace, and solicitous to make a friend of so heroic

an enemy, had sent him an offer of grace which, if he contemned, should be the last. He offered him a theatre, whereon he might display his peerless endowments, to the admiration of the world—the kingdom of Ireland, with its yet unreaped fields of glory, and all the ample riches of its abundant provinces, should be his! Edward only required in return for this royal gift, that he should abandon the cause of Scotland, swear fealty to him for Ireland, and resign into his hands, one whom he had proscribed as the most ungrateful of traitors. In double acknowledgment for the latter sacrifice, Wallace need only send to England a list of those Scottish lords against whom he bore resentment, and their fates should be ordered according to his dictates. Edward concluded his offers, by inviting him immediately to London, to be invested with his new sovereignty, and Hilton ended his address, by shewing him, the madness of abiding in a country, where

almost every chieftain secretly, or openly, carried a dagger against his life; and therefore he exhorted him, no longer to contend for a country so unworthy of freedom, that it bore with impatience the only man who had the courage to maintain it by virtue alone.

Wallace, replied calmly, and without hesitation: "To this offer, an honest man can make but one reply. As well might your sovereign exact of me, to dethrone the angels of heaven, as to require me to subscribe to his proposals!—They do but mock me; and aware of my rejection, they are thus delivered, to throw the whole blame of this cruelly-persecuting war upon me. Edward knows, that as a knight, a true Scot, and a man, I should dishonour myself to accept even life, ay, or the lives of all my kindred, upon these terms."

Hilton interrupted him, by declaring the sincerity of Edward; and contrasting it with the ingratitude of the people,

whom he had served; he conjured him, with every persuasive of rhetoric, every entreaty, dictated by a mind, that revered the very firmness he strove to shake, to relinquish his faithless country; and become the friend of a king, ready to receive him with open arms. Wallace shook his head; and with an incredulous smile, which spoke his thoughts of Edward, while his eyes beamed kindness upon Hilton, he answered—" Can the man, who would bribe me to betray a friend, be faithful in his friendship?—But that is not the weight with me:—I was not brought up in those schools, my good baron, which teach, that sound policy, or true self-interest can be separated from virtue. When I was a boy my father often repeated to me this proverb,

> Dico tibi verum, honestas optima rerum
> Nunquam servili sub nexu vivitur fili. (8)

I learnt it then; I have since made it the standard of my actions: and I answer your

monarch in a word. Were all my countrymen to resign their claims to the liberty which is their right, I alone, would declare the independence of my country; and by God's assistance, while I live, acknowledge no other master than the laws of St. David, and the legitimate heir of his blood!"——The glow of resolute patriotism, which overspread his countenance while he spoke, was reflected by a fluctuating colour on that of Hilton: ——"Noble chieftain!" cried he; "I admire, while I regret; I revere the virtue, which I am even now constrained to denounce.—These principles, bravest of men, might have suited the simple ages of Greece and Rome; a Phocion, or a Fabricius, might have uttered the like, and compelled the homage of their enemies; but in these days, such magnanimity is considered phrenzy, and ruin is its consequence."—"And shall a christian," cried Wallace, reddening with the flush of honest shame, "deem that virtue,

which even heathens practised with veneration, of too pure a nature to be exercised by men taught by Christ himself?—There is blasphemy in the idea, and I can hear no more."

Hilton, in some confusion, excused his argument, by declaring that it proceeded from his observations on the conduct of men. "And shall we," replied Wallace, "follow a multitude to do evil? I act to one Being alone. Edward must acknowledge his supremacy, and by that, know, that my soul is above all price!" "Am I answered?" said Hilton, and then hastily interrupting himself, he added in a voice even of supplication, "Your fate rests on your reply! O! noblest of warriors, consider only for a day!"—"Not for a moment," said Wallace:—"I am sensible to your kindness, but my answer to Edward has been pronounced."

Baron Hilton turned sorrowfully away, and Le de Spencer rose: "Sir William

Wallace, my part of the embassy must be delivered to you in the assembly of your chieftains!"—"In the congregation of my camp:" returned he; and opening the door of the anti-room in which his friends stood, he sent Edwin to summon his chieftains to the platform before the council-tent; and leaving the embassadors to follow with Sinclair, he withdrew between Bothwell and Ruthven;—and in his way back to the camp, narrated the particulars of Edward's insidious message.

CHAP. X.

WHEN Wallace approached his tent, he found not only the captains of his own army, but the followers of Soulis, and the chieftains of Lothian. He look-

ed on this range of his enemies with a fearless eye, and passing through the crowd, took his station beside the embassadors on the platform of the tent.—The venerable Hilton turned away in tears as he advanced, and Le de Spencer came forward to speak. Wallace perceiving his intention, with a dignified action requested his leave for a few minutes, and then addressing the congregated warriors, in brief he unfolded to them the offer of Edward to him, and what was his reply. "And now," added he, "the embassador of England is at liberty to declare his master's alternative."

Le de Spencer again stepped forward and attempted to speak; but the acclamations with which the followers of Wallace acknowledged the nobleness of his answer, excited such an opposite clamour on the side of the Soulis party, that Le de Spencer was obliged to mount a war-carriage which stood near, and vociferate long and loudly for silence, before he could be

heard. But the first words which caught the ears of his audience, acted like a spell, and seemed to hold them in breathless attention.

"Since Sir William Wallace rejects the grace of his liege lord, Edward King of England, offered to him this once, and never to be more repeated, thus saith the King in his mercy to the earls, barons, knights, and commonalty of Scotland!—To every one of them, chief and vassal, excepting the aforesaid incorrigible rebel, he, the royal Edward, grants an amnesty of all their past treasons against his sacred person and rule, provided, that within twenty-four hours after they hear the words of this proclamation, they acknowledge their disloyalty with repentance; and laying down their arms, swear eternal fealty to their only lawful ruler, Edward, the lord of the whole island, from sea to sea!"—Le de Spencer then proclaimed the King of England to be now on the borders, with an

army of a hundred thousand men, ready to march with fire and sword into the heart of the kingdom, and to put to the rack all of every sex, age, and condition, who should venture to dispute his rights. —" Yield," added he, " while yet you may, not only grasp the clemency that is extended to you, but the rewards and honours he is ready to bestow. Adhere to that unhappy man, and, by to-morrow's sunset, your offended King will be on these hills, and then mercy shall be no more! Death is the doom of Sir William Wallace; and a similar fate to every Scot, who, after this hour, dares to give him food, shelter, or succour. He is the prisoner of King Edward; and thus, I demand him at your hands!"

Wallace spoke not, but with an unmoved countenance looked around upon the assembly. " I, I will be faithful to you, to the last!" exclaimed Edwin, precipitating himself into his friend's arms.—Bothwell's full soul, now forced utterance

from his swelling breast: "Tell your sovereign," cried he, "that he mistakes.—We are the conquerors, who ought to dictate terms of peace!—Wallace is our invincible leader, our redeemer from slavery, the earthly hope in whom we trust; and it is not in the power of men, nor devils, to bribe us to betray our benefactor. Away to your King, and tell him, that Andrew Murray, and every honest Scot, is ready to live or to die by the side of Sir William Wallace."—"And by this good sword, I swear the same!" cried Ruthven. "And so do I!" rejoined Scrymgeour, "or may the standard of Scotland be my winding sheet!"

Not another chieftain spoke for Wallace. Sinclair was intimidated; and like others who wished him well, feared to utter his sentiments. But most, Oh! shame to Scotland and to man, cast up their bonnets, and cried aloud—"Long live King Edward, the only legitimate lord of Scotland!"——At this outcry,

which was echoed, even by some in whom he had confided, by the chieftains of Perthshire; while it pealed around him like a burst of thunder, Wallace threw out his arms, as if he would yet protect Scotland from herself:—"O! desolate people," exclaimed he in a voice of piercing woe, "too credulous of fair speeches, and not aware of the calamities which are coming upon you! Call to remembrance the miseries you have suffered, and start, before it be too late, from this last snare of your oppressor!—Have I yet to tell ye, that his embrace is death?"([h])

"Seize that rebellious man," cried Soulis to his marshals: "In the name of the King of England, I command you."—"And in the name of the King of Kings, I denounce death on him who attempts it!" exclaimed Bothwell, throwing himself between Wallace and the men; "put forth a hostile hand towards him, and this bugle shall call a thousand resolute swords to lay this platform deep in blood!"

Soulis, followed by his knights, pressed forward to execute his commands himself. Scrymgeour, Ruthven, and Ker, rushed before their friend. Edwin, starting forward, drew his sword, and the clash of steel was heard. Bothwell and Soulis grappled together; the falchion of Ruthven gleamed amidst a hundred swords, and blood flowed around. The voice, the arm of Wallace, in vain sought to enforce peace; he was not heard, he was not felt in the dreadful warfare. Ker fell with a gasp at his feet, and breathed no more. At such a sight, the soul-struck chief wrung his hands, and exclaimed in bitter anguish, "Oh, my country! was it for these horrors, that my Marion died? that I became a homeless wretch, and passed my days and nights in fields of carnage? Venerable Mar, dear and valiant Graham! was this the consummation for which you fell?"—At that moment Bothwell, having disabled Soulis by a wound in the arm, would have blown his

bugle to call up his men to a general conflict, but Wallace snatched the horn from his hand; and springing upon the very war-carriage from which Le de Spencer had proclaimed Edward's embassy, he drew forth his sword, and stretching the mighty arm, that held it, over the throng—with more than mortal energy he exclaimed, "Peace! men of Scotland; and for the last time, hear the voice of William Wallace." A dead silence immediately ensued, and he proceeded, "If you have aught of nobleness within ye; if a delusion, more fell than witchcraft, have not blinded your senses; look beyond this field of horror, and behold your country free. Edward, in these apparent demands, sues for peace:—Did we not drive his armies into the sea?—And were we resolved, he never could cross our borders more. What is it then you do, when you again put your necks under his yoke? Did he not seek to bribe me to betray you?—and yet, when

I refuse to purchase life, and the world's rewards, by such baseness; you—you, forget that you are free-born Scots, that you are the victors, and he the vanquished; and you give, not sell, your birth-right, to the demands of a tyrant! You yield yourselves to his extortions, his oppressions, his revenge!—Think not, he will spare the people, he would have sold to purchase his bitterest enemy; or allow them to live unmanacled, who possess the power of resistance. On the day in which you are in his hands, you will feel that you have exchanged honour for disgrace, liberty for bondage, life for death!—Me, you abhor;—and may God, in your extremest hour, forget that injustice, and pardon the faithful blood you have shed this day!—I draw this sword for you no more. But there yet lives a prince, a descendant of the royal heroes of Scotland, whom Providence may conduct to be your preserver. Reject the proposals of Edward; dare to defend the

freedom you now possess; and that prince will soon appear, to crown your patriotism with glory and happiness!"

"We acknowledge no prince but King Edward of England!" cried Buchan.—"His countenance is our glory, his presence our happiness!"—The exclamation was reiterated by almost all on the ground. Wallace was transfixed.—"Then," cried Le de Spencer, in the first pause of the tumult, "to every man, woman, and child, throughout the realm of Scotland, excepting Sir William Wallace, I proclaim, in the name of King Edward, pardon and peace."

At these words, a thousand Scottish chieftains dropped on their knees before Le de Spencer, and murmured their vows of fealty. Indignant, grieved, Wallace took his helmet from his head, and throwing his sword into the hand of Bothwell, "That weapon," cried he, "which I wrested from this very King Edward, and with which I twice drove him from our bor-

ders, I give to you. In your hands it may again serve Scotland. I relinquish a soldier's name, on the spot where I humbled England three times in one day; where I now see my victorious country deliver herself, bound, into the grasp of the vanquished! I go, without sword, or buckler, from this dishonoured field; and what Scot, my public or private enemy, will dare to strike the unguarded head of William Wallace?"——As he spoke he threw his shield and helmet to the ground; and leaping from the war-carriage, took his course, with a fearless and dignified step, through the parting ranks of his enemies; who, awe-struck, or kept in check by a suspicion that others might not second the attack they would have made on him, durst not lift an arm, or breathe a word as he passed.

Wallace had adopted this manner of leaving the ground, in hopes, if it were possible to awaken the least spark of honour in the breasts of his persecutors, to

prevent the bloodshed which must ensue between his friends and them, should they attempt to seize him. Edwin and Bothwill immediately followed him; but Ruthven and Scrymgeour remained, to take charge of the remains of the faithful Ker,(1) and to quiet the tumult which began to murmur amongst the lower orders of the by-standers.

CHAP. XI.

A VAGUE suspicion of the Regent, and his council; and a panic-struck pusillanimity, which shrunk from supporting that Wallace, whom the abthanes chose to abandon; carried the spirit of slavery from the platform before the council-tent, to the chieftains who thronged the ranks

of Ruthven; and even to the perversion of some few, who had followed the golden-haired standard of Bothwell. The brave troops of Lanerk (which the desperate battle of Dalkeith had reduced to not more than sixty men,) alone remained unmoved.

In the moment when the indignant Ruthven saw his Perthshire legions rolling off towards the trumpet of Le de Spencer, Scrymgeour placed himself at the head of the Lanerkers, and unfurling the banner of Scotland, marched with a steady step to the tent of Bothwell; whither, he did not doubt, that Wallace had retired. He found him assuaging the impassioned grief of Edwin, for what had passed; and striving to moderate the vehement wrath of the faithful Murray. "Pour not out the energy of your spirit upon these worthless men!" said he; "leave them to the fates they seek; the fates they have incurred, by the innocent blood shed this day! The few brave

hearts, who yet remain loyal to their country, are insufficient to stem at this spot, the torrent of corruption. Retire beyond the Forth, my friend. Rally all true Scots around Hunting tower.—Let the valiant inmate proclaim himself, and, at the foot of the Grampians, lock the gates of the Highlands upon our enemies. From those bulwarks he will issue in strength, and Scotland may again be free!"

"Free, but never more honoured!" cried Edwin; "never more beloved by me! Ungrateful, treacherous, base land," added he, starting on his feet, and raising his clasped hands with the vehement adjuration of an indignant spirit; "Oh, that the salt sea would engulph thee at once; that thy name, and thy ingratitude, could be no more remembered!—I will never wear a sword for her again." "Edwin!" ejaculated Wallace, in a reproachful, yet tender tone. "Exhort me not to forgive my country!" returned he; "tell

me, to take my deadliest foe to my breast; to pardon the assassin, who strikes his steel into my heart; and I will obey you: but to pardon Scotland, for the injury that she has done to you; for the disgrace, with which her self-debasement stains this cheek; I never, never can!—I abhor these sons of Lucifer! Think not, noblest of masters, dearest of friends," cried he, throwing himself at Wallace's feet, "that I will ever shine in the light of those envious stars, which have displaced the sun! No, *tibi soli*(k) shall henceforth be the impresse on my shield: to thee alone will I ever turn; and till your beams restore your country, and revive me, the springing laurels of Edwin Ruthven shall wither where they grew!" Wallace folded him to his heart; a tear stood in his eye, while his cheek touched that of Edwin, and he said in a low voice, "If thou art mine, thou art Scotland's. Me, she rejects.—Mysterious Heaven wills, that I should quit my post; but for thee, Edwin, as a

relic of the fond love I yet bear this wretched country, abide by her; bear with her, cherish her, defend her for my sake: and if Bruce lives, he will be to thee a second Wallace, a friend, a brother!"

Edwin listened, wept, and sobbed, but his heart was fixed; and unable to speak, he broke from his friend's arms, and hurried into an interior apartment to subdue his emotions.

Ruthven now joined in determined opinion with Bothwell, that if ever a civil war could be sanctified, this was the time; and in spite of all that Wallace could urge against the madness of contending for his supremacy over a nation which would not yield him obedience, still they remained firm in their resolution. Bruce, they hardly dared hope would recover; and to relinquish the guiding hand of their best approved leader at this crisis, was a sacrifice, no earthly power should compel them to make. "So far from it," cried Lord Bothwell, dropping

on his knee, and grasping the cross hilt of his sword in both hands, "I swear by the blood of the crucified Lord of an ungrateful world, that should Bruce die, I will obey no other King of Scotland than William Wallace!" Wallace turned ashy pale as he listened to this vow. At that moment Scrymgeour entered, followed by the Lanerkers; and all kneeling at his feet, repeated the oath of Bothwell, and called on him, by the unburied corse of his murdered Ker, to lead them forth, and avenge them of his enemies.

When the agitation of his soul would allow him to speak to this faithful group, he stretched his hands over them; and with tears, such as a father would shed, who looks on the children he is to behold no more, gliding over his cheeks; he said in a subdued and faltering voice, "God will avenge our friend: my sword is sheathed for ever. May that holy Being, who is the true and best king of the virtuous, always be present with you! I feel

your love, and I appreciate it. But, Bothwell, Ruthven, Scrymgeour, my faithful Lanerkers, leave me awhile to compose my scattered thoughts. Let me pass this night alone; and to-morrow you shall know the resolution of your grateful Wallace!"

The shades of evening were closing in, and the Lanerkers, first obtaining his permission to keep guard before the wood which skirted the tent, respectfully kissing his hand, withdrew. Ruthven called Edwin from the recess, whither he had retired to unburthen his grief: but as soon as he heard, that it was the resolution of his friends, to preserve the authority of Wallace, or to perish in the contest; the gloom passed from his fair brow, a smile of triumph parted his lips, and he exclaimed, "All will be well again! We shall force this deluded nation to recognise her safety and her happiness!"

While the determined chiefs held discourse, congenial with the wishes of the

youthful knight, Wallace sat almost silent. He seemed revolving some momentous idea: he frequently turned his eyes on the speakers, with a fixed regard, which appeared rather full of a grave sorrow, than demonstrative of any sympathy in the subjects of their discussion. On Edwin, he at times looked with penetrating tenderness; and when the bell from the neighbouring convent, sounded the hour of rest, he stretched out his hand to him with a smile, which he wished should speak of comfort as well as of affection; but the soul spoke more eloquently than he had intended: his smile was mournful; and the attempt to render it otherwise, like a transient light over a dark sepulchre, only the more distinctly shewed the gloom and horrors within. "And am I too to leave you?" said Edwin. "Yes, my brother," replied Wallace, "I have much to do with Heaven, and my own thoughts, this night. We separate now, to meet more gladly hereafter. I must have solitude to

arrange my plans. To-morrow you shall know them. Meanwhile farewel!"—As he spoke, he pressed the affectionate youth to his breast; and warmly grasping the hands of his three other friends, bade them an earnest adieu.

Bothwell lingered a moment at the tent door, and looking back; "Let your first plan be, that to-morrow you lead us to Lord Soulis's quarters, to teach the traitor, what it is to be a Scot and a man!"

"My plans shall be deserving of my brave colleagues," replied Wallace; "and whether they be executed on this, or the other side of the Forth, you shall find, my long tried Bothwell, that Scotland's peace, and the honour of her best sons, are the dearest considerations of your friend."

When the door closed, and Wallace was left alone, he stood for awhile in the middle of the tent, listening to the departing steps of his friends. When the last sound died on his ear; "I shall hear

them no more!" cried he; and throwing himself into a seat, he remained for an hour lost in a trance of grievous thoughts. Melancholy remembrances, and prospects dire for Scotland, pressed upon his surcharged heart. "It is to God alone, I must confide my country!" cried he; "his mercy will pity its madness, and forgive its deep transgressions. My duty is, to remove the object of ruin, far from the power of any longer exciting jealousy, or awakening zeal." With these words, he took a pen in his hand to write to Bruce.

He briefly narrated the events which compelled him, if he would avoid the grief of having occasioned a civil war, to quit his country for ever. The general hostility of the nobles; the unresisting acquiescence of the people, in measures which menaced his life, and sacrificed the freedom for which he had so long fought, convinced him, he said, that his warlike commission was now closed. He was summoned by Heaven, to exchange the

field for the cloister: and to the monastery at Chartres he was now hastening, to dedicate the remainder of his days to the peace of a future world. He then exhorted Bruce, to confide in the lords Ruthven and Bothwell, as his soul would commune with his spirit, for that he would find them true unto death. He counselled him, as the leading measure, to circumvent the treason of Scotland's enemies, to go immediately to Kilchurn castle. Lochawe had retired thither on the last approach of De Warenne, meaning to call out his vassals for the emergency. But the battle of Dalkeith was fought, and gained, before they could leave their heights; and the victor did not need them afterwards. To use them for his establishment on the throne of his kingdom, Wallace advised Bruce. Amidst the natural fortresses of the Highlands, he might recover his health, collect his friends, and openly proclaim himself. "Then," added he, "when Scotland is your own, let its

bulwarks be its mountains and its people's arms. Dismantle, and raze to the ground, the castles of those chieftains, who have only embattled them to betray and enslave their country." Though intent on these political suggestions, he ceased not to remember his own brave engines of war; and he earnestly conjured his prince, that he would wear the valiant Kirkpatrick as a buckler on his heart; that he would place the faithful Scrymgeour, with his Lanerkers, and Grimsby, next him as his body guard; and, that he would love and cherish the brave and tender Edwin, for his sake. "When my prince and friend receives this," added he, "Wallace shall have bidden an eternal farewel to Scotland: but his heart will be amidst its hills. My king, the friends most dear to me, will still be there! The earthly part of my beloved wife, rests within its bosom. But I go to rejoin her soul: to meet it in the nightly vigils of days, consecrated wholly to the blessed Being, in whose

presence she rejoices for ever. This is no sad destiny, my dear Bruce. Our Almighty Captain recals me, from dividing, with you, the glory of maintaining the liberty of Scotland; but he brings me closer to himself: I leave the plains of Gilgal, to ascend with his angel into the Empyrean! Mourn not, then, my absence; for my prayers will be with you, till we are again united in the only place where you can fully know me as I am, thine, and Scotland's, never-dying friend! Start not at the bold epithet. My body may sink into the grave; but the affections of my immortal spirit are eternal as its essence; and in earth, or in heaven, I am ever yours.

"Should the endearing Helen be near your couch, when you read this, tell her, that Wallace now, in idea, presses her virgin cheek with a brother's farewel; and from his inmost soul he blesses her."

Messages of respectful adieus, he sent to Isabella, Lady Ruthven, and the sage

of Ercildown: and then kneeling down, in that posture he wrote his last invocations for the prosperity and happiness of Bruce.

This letter finished, with a more tranquil mind he addressed Lord Ruthven; detailing to him his reasons for leaving such faithful friends so clandestinely: and after mentioning his purpose of proceeding to France, he ended with those expressions of gratitude, which the worthy chief so well deserved; and exhorting him to transfer his public zeal for him, to the magnanimous and royal Bruce; closed the letter, with begging him, for the sake of his friend, his king, and his country, to return immediately with all his followers to Hunting tower, and to deliver to their prince the inclosed. His letter to Scrymgeour spoke nearly the same language. But when he began to write to Bothwell; to bid him that farewel, which, his heart foreboded, would be for ever in this world; to part from this, his steady

companion in arms, his dauntless champion! he lost some of his composure; and his hand-writing, testified the emotion of his mind. How then was he shaken, when he addressed the young and devoted Edwin, the brother of his soul! He dropped the pen from his hand. At that moment he felt all he was going to relinquish, and he exclaimed, "Oh, Scotland! my ungrateful country! what is it you do? Is it thus that you repay your most faithful servants? It is not enough that the wife of my bosom, the companion of my youth, should be torn from me by your enemies; but your hand, must wrest from my bereaved heart, its every other solace. You snatch from me my friends; you would deprive me of my life! To preserve you from that crime, I imbitter the cup of death; I go far from the tombs of my fathers; from the grave of my Marion, where I had fondly hoped to rest!" His head sank on his arm; his heart gave way under the pressure of ac-

cumulated regrets, and floods of tears poured from his eyes. Deep and frequent were his sighs,—but none answered him. Friendship was far distant; and where was that gentle being, who would have soothed his sorrow on her bosom? She it was he lamented. "Dreary, dreary solitude!" cried he, looking around him with an aghast perception of all that he had lost: "how have I been mocked for these three long years! What is renown, what the loud acclaim of admiring throngs, what the bended knees of worshipping gratefulness, but breath and vapour! It seems to shelter the mountain's top: the blast comes; it rolls from its sides; and the lonely hill is left to all the storm! So stand I, my Marion, when bereft of thee. In weal or woe, thy smiles, thy warm embrace, were mine: my head reclined on that faithful breast, and still I found my home, my heaven. But now, desolate and alone, ruin is around me. Destruction waits on all, who would steal

one pang from the racked heart of William Wallace! even pity is no more for me!—Take me, then, O! Power of Mercy!" cried he, stretching forth his hands, "take me to thyself!"

At these words a peal of thunder burst on his ear, and seemed to roll over his tent, till passing off towards the west, it died away in long and solemn reverberation. Wallace rose from his knee, on which he had sunk at this awful response to his heaven-directed adjuration: "Thou callest me, my Father!" cried he, with a holy confidence dilating his soul; "I go from the world to thee!—I come, and before thy altars shall know no human weakness."

In a paroxysm of sacred enthusiasm, he rushed from the tent; and reckless whither he went, struck into the depths of Roslyn woods. With the steps of the wind, he pierced their remotest thickets. He reached their boundary; it was traversed by a rapid stream: but that did

not stop his course; he sprang over it; and, ascending its moonlight bank, was startled by the sound of his name. Grimsby, attended by a youth, stood before him. The veteran expressed amazement, at meeting his master alone at his hour, unhelmeted, and unarmed, in so dangerous a direction. "The road," said he, "between this and Stirling, is beset with your enemies." Wallace, instead of noticing this information, inquired of the soldier what news he brought from Hunting tower. "The worst," said he.—"By this time the royal Bruce is no more!" Wallace gasped convulsively, and fell against a tree. Grimsby paused. In a few minutes the heart-struck chief was able to speak: "Listen not to my groans for unhappy Scotland!" cried he; "shew me all that is in this last phial of wrath."

Grimsby, with as much caution as he could, informed him, that Bruce had been so far recovered as to have left his couch, when yesterday, in the morning, a letter

was brought to Lady Helen, who was sitting with him. She opened it; and having read only a few lines, fell senseless into the arms of her sister. Bruce, alarmed for Ruthven, instantly snatched up the packet: but not a word did he speak, till he had perused it to the end. It was from the Countess of Strathearn; cruelly exulting in, what she termed, the demonstration of Wallace's guilt; and congratulating herself on having been the primary means of discovering it, ended with a boast, that his once adoring Scotland now held him in such detestation as to have doomed him to die. It was this denunciation which had struck to the soul of Helen; and while the anxious Lady Ruthven removed her inanimate form into another room, he read the barbarous triumphs of this disappointed woman. "No power on earth can save him now," continued she; "your doting heart must yield him, Helen, to another rest than your bridal chamber. His iron breast,

shall meet with others as adamantine as his own. A hypocrite! he feels not pity, he knows no beat of human sympathies, and, like a rock he will fall, unpitied, undeplored:—undeplored by all but you, lost, self-deluded girl! My noble lord, the princely De Warenne, informs me, that your Wallace is outlawed by his own country, and a price set upon his head by ours: hence, there is safety for him no where. Those he has outraged shall be avenged:—and his cries for mercy! who will answer? No voice on earth. None will dare support the man, whom friends, and enemies, abandon to destruction."

"Yes," cried Bruce, starting from his seat, "I will support him, thou damned traitoress! Bruce will declare himself!—Bruce will throw himself before his friend, and in his breast, receive every arrow meant for that godlike heart! Yes," cried he, glancing on the terrified looks of Isabella, who believed that his delirium was

returned, "I would snatch him in these arms from the flames, did all the fiends of hell guard the infernal fire!" Not a word more did he utter, but darting into his apartment, in a few minutes was seen before the barbacan-gate, armed from head to foot, and calling on Grimsby to bring him a horse. Grimsby obeyed; and at that moment Lady Helen appeared from the window, wringing her hands, and exclaiming, "Save him, for the love of heaven, save him!" "Yes," cried Bruce, "or you see me no more." And striking his rowels into his horse, he was out of sight in an instant.

Grimsby followed, and came in view of him, just as he was attempting to cross a wide fissure in the rocky path: the horse struck his heel against a loose stone as he made the leap, and it giving way, he lost his spring, and fell headlong into the deep ravine. At the moment of his disappearance, Grimsby, with a cry of horror rushed towards the spot, and saw the

horse struggling in the agonies of death at the bottom. Bruce lay insensible, amongst some bushes, which grew nearer the top. With difficulty the honest Englishman got him dragged to the surface of the hill; and finding all attempts to recover him ineffectual, he laid him on his own beast, and so carried him slowly back to the castle. The assiduities of the sage of Ercildown restored him to life, but not to recollection. "The fever returned on him, with a delirium so hopeless of recovery," continued Grimsby, "that, Lord Douglas, not being returned from Scone, (where he was stationed, to keep all in order during our prince's illness;) the Lady Helen, in an agony of grief, sent me, with this youth, to implore you to go to Hunting tower. All the ladies say, they will conceal you till Bruce is recovered; and then, most noble Wallace, he will proclaim himself, and again move with you, his right hand, to achieve his crown. But should he be torn from us,

Loch-awe is in arms, and the kingdom may be yours!"

"Send me," cried Walter Hay, grasping his hand, "send me back to Lady Helen, and let me tell her, that our benefactor, the best guardian of our country, will not abandon us! Should you depart, Scotland's genius will go with you; again she must sink, again she will be in ruins. De Valence will regain possession of my dear lady, and you will not be near to save her."

"Grimsby, Walter, my faithful friends!" cried Wallace in an agitated voice; "I do not abandon Scotland: she drives me from her. Would she have allowed me, I would have borne her in my arms until my latest gasp; but it must not be so. I resign her into the Almighty's hands, to which I commit myself: they will also preserve the Lady Helen from violence. Bruce is with her.—If he lives, he will protect her for my sake; and should he die, Bothwell and Ruthven will cherish

her for their own." "But you will go to her," said Grimsby. "Disguised in these peasant's garments, which we have brought for the purpose, you may pass through the legions of the Regent with perfect security." "Let me implore you, if not for your own sake, for ours!—Pity our desolation, and save yourself for them who can know no safety when you are gone! Walter clung by his arm, as he uttered this supplication. Wallace looked tenderly upon him:—"I would save myself; and I will, please God," said he; "but by no means unworthy of myself. I go, but not under any disguise.—Openly have I defended Scotland, and openly will I pass through her lands. None, who would not be more doubly accurst than the murderer Cain, will venture to impede my steps. The chalice of Heaven consecrated me the champion of my country, and no Scot dare lift a hostile hand against this anointed head."

"Whither do you go?" cried Grims-

by. "Let me follow you, in joy or in sorrow!" "And me too, my benefactor!" rejoined Walter; "and when you look on me, think not that Scotland is altogether ungrateful!"

"My faithful friends," returned he, "whither I go, I must go alone. And, as a proof of your love, grant me your obedience this once.—Rest amongst these thickets till morning.—I would not have my good Lanerkers disturbed, sooner than is needful, by the evil news you bring. At sunrise you may join their camp: then you will know my destination. But till Bruce proclaims himself at the head of his country's armies, for my sake, never reveal to mortal man, that he who lies debilitated by sickness at Hunting tower, is other than Sir Thomas de Longueville." "Rest, we cannot," replied Grimsby; "but still we will obey our master. You command me to adhere to Bruce; to serve him till the hour of his death: I will—but should he die, then I may seek you

out, and again be your faithful servant?"

"You will find me before the cross of Christ," returned Wallace, "with saints my fellow-soldiers, and God my only king! Till then, Grimsby, farewel. Walter, carry my fidelity to your mistress. She will share my thoughts with the Blessed Virgin of Heaven; for in all my prayers, shall her name be remembered."

Grimsby and Walter, struck by the holy solemnity of his manner, fell on their knees before him. Wallace raised his hands: "Bless, Oh, Father of Light!" cried he; "bless this unhappy land, when Wallace is no more; and let his memory be lost in the virtues and prosperity of Robert Bruce!"

Grimsby sank on the earth, and gave way to a burst of manly sorrow. Walter hid his weeping face in the folds of his master's mantle, which had fallen from his shoulders to the ground. Lost in grief, no thought seemed to exist in his heart, but the resolution to live only for his per-

secuted benefactor; and to express this vow with all the energy of determined devotedness, he looked up to seek the face of Wallace—but Wallace had disappeared—and all that remained of their beloved lord, to the breaking hearts of his faithful servants, was the tartan plaid which they clasped in their arms.(1)

CHAP. XII.

WALLACE having turned abruptly away from his lamenting servants, struck into the deep defiles of the Pentland hills: they pointed to different tracks. Deeming it probable, that the determined affection of some of his friends, might urge them to dare the perils attendant on his fellowship, he hesitated a moment which path to take. Certainly not towards Hunting

tower, to bring immediate destruction on its royal inhabitant. Neither to any chieftain of the Highlands, to give rise to a spirit of civil warfare, which, might not afterwards be sanctioned by its only just excuse, the appearance and establishment of the lawful prince. Neither would he pursue the eastern track; for in that direction, as pointing to France, his friends would seek him.—He therefore turned his steps towards the ports of Ayr. The road was circuitous; but it would soon enough take him from the land of his fathers, from the country he must never see again.

As morning dispelled the shades of night, it discovered still more dreary glooms. A heavy mist hung over the hills, and rolled before him along the valley. Still he pursued his way, although, as day advanced, the vapours collected into thicker blackness; and floating down the heights, at last burst in a deluge of overwhelming rain. All around was dark-

ened by the descending water; and the accumulating floods, dashing from the projecting craigs above, swelled the burn in his path to a roaring river. Wallace stood in the torrent, with its wild waves breaking against his sides. The rain fell on his uncovered head, and the chilling blast sighed in his streaming hair.—Looking around him, he paused a moment amid this tumult of nature: "Must there be strife, even amongst the elements, to shew, that this is no longer a land for me?—Spirits of these hills," cried he, "pour not thus your rage on a banished man!—A man without a friend, without a home!" He started, and smiled at his own adjuration. "The spirits of my ancestors ride not in these blasts: the delegated powers of Heaven, launch not this tempest on a defenceless head; 'tis chance!—but affliction shapes all things to its own likeness. Thou, Oh! my Father, would not suffer any demon of the air, to bend thy broken reed! There-

fore, rain on ye torrents; ye are welcome to William Wallace. He can well breast the mountain storm, who has stemmed the ingratitude of his country."

Hills, rivers, and vales, were measured by his solitary steps, till entering on the heights of Clydesdale, the broad river of his native glen spread its endeared waters before him. Not a wave passed along, that had not kissed the feet of some scene consecrated to his memory. Before him, over the western hills, lay the lands of his forefathers. There he had first drawn his breath; there he imbibed from the lips of his revered grandfather, now no more, those lessons of virtue, by which he had lived, and for which he was now ready to die. Far to the left, stretched the wide domains of Lammington: there his youthful heart first knew the pulse of love; there all nature smiled upon him, for Marion was near, and hope hailed him from every sun-lit mountain's brow. Onward in the depths of the cliffs, lay Ellerslie,

the home of his heart, where he had tasted the joys of Paradise; but all there, like that once blessed place, now lay in one wide ruin!

"Shall I visit thee again?" said he, as he hurried along the beetling craigs; "Ellerslie! Ellerslie!" cried he, "'tis no hero, no triumphant warrior, that approaches! Receive—shelter, thy deserted, widowed master! I come, my Marion, to mourn thee in thine own domains!" He flew forward; he ascended the cliffs; he rushed down the hazle-crowned path-way —but it was no longer smooth; thistles, and thickly-interwoven underwood, obstructed his steps. Breaking through them all, he turned the angle of the rock, the last screen between him and the view of his once beloved home. On this spot, he used to stand, on moonlight evenings, watching the graceful form of his Marion, as she passed to and fro by her window, preparing for her nightly rest. His eye now turned instinctively to the same

point; but it gazed on vacancy. His home had disappeared: one solitary tower alone remained, standing like "a hermit the last of his race," to mourn over the desolation of all with which it had once been surrounded.(m) Not a human being now moved on the spot, which, three years before, was thronged with his grateful vassals. Not a voice was now heard, where then sounded the harp of Halbert; where breathed the soul-entrancing song of his beloved Marion! "Death!" cried he, striking his breast, "how many ways hast thou to bereave poor mortality! All, all gone!—My Marion sleeps in Bothwell: the faithful Halbert at her feet. And my peasantry of Lanerk, how many of you have found untimely graves in the bosom of your vainly-rescued country!"

He sprang on the mouldering fragments, heaped over the pavement of what had been the hall. "My wife's blood marks these stones!" cried he. He flung him-

self along them, and a groan burst from his heart. It echoed mournfully from the opposite rock.—He started, and gazed around. "Solitude!" cried he, with a faint smile; "nought is here, but Wallace and his sorrow. Marion! I call, and even thou dost not answer me; thou who didst ever fly at the sound of my voice! Look on me, love," exclaimed he, stretching his arms towards the sky; "look on me; and for once, for ever, cheer thy lonely, heart-stricken Wallace!" Tears choked his further utterance; and once more laying his head upon the stones, he wept in silence, till exhausted nature found repose in sleep.

The sun was gilding the grey summits of the ruined tower, under whose shadow he lay, when Wallace slowly opened his eyes; looking around him, he smote his breast, and with a heavy groan sunk back upon the stones. In the silence which succeeded this burst of memory, he thought he heard a rustling near him,

and a half-suppressed sigh. He listened breathless. The sigh was repeated.—He gently raised himself on his hand, and with an expectation he dared hardly whisper to himself, turned towards the spot whence the sound proceeded. The branches of a rose-tree that had been planted by his Marion, shook, and scattered the leaves of its ungathered flowers upon the brambles which grew beneath. Wallace rose in agitation; the skirts of a human figure appeared, retreating behind the ruins. He advanced towards it, and beheld Edwin Ruthven. The moment their eyes met, Edwin precipitated himself at his feet, and clinging to him, exclaimed, "Pardon me this pursuit? But we meet to part no more!" Wallace raised him, and strained him to his breast in silence. Edwin, in hardly articulate accents continued; "Some kind Power checked your hand, when writing to your Edwin. You could not command him not to follow you! you left the letter unfinished; and

thus I come, to bless you, for not condemning me to die of a broken heart!"—"I did not write farewel to thee," cried Wallace, looking mournfully on him; "but I meant it: for, I must part from all I love in Scotland. It is my doom. This country needs me not; and I have need of heaven. I go into it outcourts at Chartres. Follow me there, dear boy, when thou hast accomplished thy noble career on the earth; and then, our grey hairs shall mingle together over the altar of the God of Peace: but now, receive the farewel of thy friend.—Return to Bruce, and be to him, the dearest representative of William Wallace."—"Never, never!" cried Edwin: "Thou alone art my prince, my friend, my brother, my all in this world!—My parents, dear as they are, would have buried my youth in a cloister; but your name called me to honour; and to you, in life or death, I dedicate my being."——"Then," returned Wallace, "that honour summons you

to the side of the dying Bruce. He is now in the midst of his foes."——"And where art thou?" interrupted Edwin; "Who drove thee hence, but enemies? who line these roads, but wretches, sent to betray their benefactor? No, my friend, thy fate shall be my fate, thy woe my woe! We live, or we die, together: the field, the cloister, or the tomb; all shall be welcomed by Edwin Ruthven, if they separate him not from thee!" Seeing that Wallace was going to speak, and fearful that it was to repeat his commands to be left alone, he suddenly exclaimed with vehemence, "Father of men and angels! grant me thy favour, only as I am true to the vow I have sworn, never more to leave the side of Sir William Wallace!"

To urge the dangers to which such a resolution would expose this too faithful friend, Wallace knew would be in vain: he read an invincible determination in the eye and gesture of Edwin; and, there-

fore, yielding to the demands of friendship, he threw himself on his neck. "For thy sake, Edwin, I will yet bear with mankind at large! Thy bloom of honour, shall not be cropt by my hand. We will go together to France; and while I rest under the roof of its good king, thou shalt bear the standard of Scotland in the land of our ally against the proud enemies of Bruce."——"Make of me what you will;" returned Edwin, pressing his hand to his lips; "only do not divide me from yourself!"

Wallace explained to his friend his design of crossing the hills to Ayrshire; in some port of which, he did not doubt finding a vessel bound for France. This plan, Edwin overturned, by telling him, that the moment the abthanes re-pledged their secret faith to England, they sent a strong guard to Ayrshire, with orders to watch the movements of his powerful relations, and to prevent their either hearing of, or marching to the assistance of

their wronged kinsman. And besides this, no sooner was it discovered by the insurgent lords at Roslyn, that Wallace had disappeared from the camp, than supposing he meant to appeal to Philip, they dispatched expresses all along the western and eastern coasts, from the friths of Forth and Clyde, to those of Solway and Berwick upon Tweed, to intercept him. Wallace, on finding that all avenues from the southern parts of his country, were closed upon him, determined to try the north. Some bay in the Western Highlands, might open, its yet not ungrateful arms, to set its benefactor free. "If not by a ship," returned Edwin, "a fisher's boat will launch us from a country no longer worthy of you;—and, by the power of Him, who hushed the raging waves of Galilee, my master shall yet find a haven and a friend!"

Their course was then taken along the Cartlane craigs, at a distance from villages and mountain cots, which, leaning

from their verdant heights, seemed to invite the traveller to refreshment and repose. Though the sword of Wallace had won them this quiet; though his wisdom, like the hand of creation, had spread the lately barren hills with beauteous harvests; yet, had an ear of corn been asked in his name, it would have been denied. A price was set upon his head; and the lives of all who should succour him would be forfeited!—He who had given bread, and homes, to thousands, was left to perish,—had not where to lay his head. Edwin looked anxiously on him, as at times they sped silently along: "Ah!" thought he, "this heroic endurance of evil, is the true cross of our celestial captain! Let who will carry its painted insignia to the Holy Land, here is the man that bears the real substance, that walks undismayed in the path of his sacrificed Lord!"

The black plumage of a common Highland bonnet, which Edwin had purchased

at one of the cottages, to which he went alone, to buy a few oaten cakes, hung over the face of his friend. That face no longer blazed with the fire of generous valour; it was pale and sad:—but whenever he turned his eye on Edwin, the shades, which seemed to envelop it, disappeared; a bright smile, spoke the peaceful consciousness within; a look of grateful affection, expressed his comfort, at having found that, in defiance of every danger, he was not yet forsaken. Edwin's happy spirit rejoiced in every glad beam which shone on the face of him he loved. It awoke felicity in his heart. To be occasionally near Wallace, to share his confidence with others, had always filled him with joy; but now to be the only one, on whom his noble heart leaned for consolation, was bliss unutterable. He trod in air; and even chid his beating heart for the delight, which seemed to exult when his friend suffered:—" But not so," ejaculated he internally; " it is

delight to live and die with thee. And if it be such pleasure, even to share thy calamity; what will be my felicity, when I dwell with thee in security, and princely honours! For such, dearest of friends; will be the welcome of Philip to his Lord of Gascony!" These thoughts comforted Edwin; but he did not allow them to escape his bosom.

As they arrived within sight of the high towers of Bothwell castle, Wallace stopped. "We must not go thither;" said Edwin, replying to the sentiment which spoke from the eyes of his friend; "the servants of my cousin Andrew, may not be as faithful as their lord!"—"I will not try them;" returned Wallace with a resigned smile; "my presence in Bothwell chapel, shall not pluck danger on the head of my dauntless Murray. She wakes in heaven for me, whose body sleeps there; and knowing where to find the jewel, my friend! shall I linger over the casket?"

While he yet spoke, a chieftain, on horse-back, suddenly emerged from the trees which led to the castle, and drew to their side. Edwin was wrapped in his plaid; and, cautiously concealing his face, that no chance of his being recognised, might betray his companion, walked on without once looking at the stranger. But Wallace, being without any shade over the noble contour of his form, which, for majesty and grace was unequalled in Scotland, could not be mistaken. He moved swiftly forward. The horseman spurred after him. Wallace, perceiving himself pursued, and therefore known, and aware that he must be overtaken, suddenly stopped. Edwin drew his sword, and would have given it into the hand of his friend, but Wallace putting it back, rapidly answered; "Leave my defence to this unweaponed arm. I would not use steel against my countrymen, but none shall take me while I have a sinew to resist."

The chieftain now checked his horse in front of Wallace, and respectfully raising his visor, discovered Sir John Monteith. At sight of him, Edwin dropped the point of his yet uplifted sword; and Wallace stepping back, "Monteith," said he, "I am sorry for this rencontre. If you would be safe from the destiny which pursues me, you must retire immediately, and forget that we have met."—"Never!" cried Monteith; "I know the ingratitude of an envious country, drives the bravest of her champions from its borders; but I also know what belongs to myself! To serve you at all hazards; and in my castle of Newark on the frith of Clyde, to demonstrate my sense of the dangers you once incurred for me. I therefore thank my fortune for this rencontre."

In vain Wallace urged his determination not to bring peril on any of his countrymen, by sojourning under a roof, till he were far from Scotland. In vain he

pointed to Monteith, the outlawry which would await him, should the infuriate abthanes discover that he had given shelter to the man whom they chose to suppose an enemy, and denounce as one. Monteith, after as unsuccessful persuasions on his side, at last declared, that he knew a vessel was now lying at Newark, in which Wallace might embark, without entering any house. He ended, with imploring that his friend would allow him to be his guide to its anchorage. To enforce this supplication, he threw himself off his horse, and leaving it to stray whither it would, with protestations of a fidelity that trampled on all dangers, he entreated, even with tears, and the most vehement gestures of despair, not to be refused the last comfort which he foresaw he should ever know in his now degraded country. "Once I saw Scotland's steady champion, the brave Douglas, rifled from her shores! Do not then doom me to a second grief, bitterer than the first; do

not you, yourself, drive me from the side of her last hero!—Ah! let me behold you, companion of my school-days, Friend, Leader, Benefactor! till the sea wrests you for ever from my eyes!"—Exhausted and affected, Wallace gave his hand to Monteith: the tear of gratitude stood in his eye. He looked affectionately from Monteith to Edwin, from Edwin to Monteith; "Wallace shall yet live in the memory of the virtuous of this land: you, my friends, prove it. I go richly forth, for the hearts of good men are my companions."

As they journeyed along the devious windings of the Clyde, and saw, at a distance, the aspiring turrets of Rutherglen, Edwin pointed to them and said, "From that church, a few months ago, did you dictate a conqueror's terms to England!"——"And now that very England makes me a fugitive!" returned Wallace.—"Oh! not England!" interrupted Edwin; "you bow not to her. It

is blind, mad Scotland, who thus thrusts her benefactor from her!"——"Ah! then, my Edwin," rejoined he, "read in me, the history of thousands! So various is the fate of a people's idol: to-day he is worshipped as a god, to-morrow thrown into the fire!"

Monteith turned pale at this conversation; and quickening his steps, hurried in silence past the opening of the valley which presented the view of Rutherglen.

Night overtook the travellers at the little village of Lumloch, about two hours journey from Glasgow. Here, as a severe storm came on, Monteith advised his friends to take shelter and rest. "As you object to lodge with man," said he, "you may sleep secure in an old ruined barn which at present has no ostensible owner. I saw it, as I passed this way from Newark. But I rather wish you would forget this too chary regard for others, and lodge with me in the neigh-

bouring cottage."—Wallace was insensible to the pelting of the elements; his unsubdued spirit neither wanted rest for mind nor body: but the languid voice, and lingering step of the young Edwin, who had been unused to such fatigue on foot, penetrated his heart; and notwithstanding that the resolute boy, on the first proposal of Monteith, suddenly rallied himself, and declared he was neither weary nor faint, Wallace saw that he was both; and yielded his consent to be conducted from the storm. "But not," said he, "to the house. We will go into the barn; and there, on the dry earth, my Edwin and I will gratefully repose."

Monteith did not oppose him farther, and pushing open the door, Wallace and Edwin entered. Their friend soon after followed with a light, from the cottage, and pulling down some heaped straw, strewed it on the ground for a bed. "Here I shall sleep like a prince!" cried Edwin, throwing himself along the scattered truss.

"But not," returned Monteith, "till I have disengaged you from your wet garments; and, for the sake of future scenes of prowess, preserved your arms and brigandine from the rust of this night." Edwin, sunk in weariness, said little in opposition; and having suffered Monteith to take away his sword, and to unbrace his plated vest, dropped at once on the straw in a profound sleep.

Wallace, that he might not disturb his friend by debate, also yielded to the request of Monteith; and having resigned his arms to him, waved him a good night. Monteith nodded the same, and closed the door upon his victims.

Well known to the generals of King Edward, as one who estimated his soul as a mere counter of traffick, Sir John Monteith was considered by them all as a hireling fit for any purpose.—De Warenne, though he had been persuaded to use unworthy means to intimidate his great opponent, would have shrunk from

being a coadjutor of treachery. His removal from the Lord-wardenship of Scotland, in consequence of the wounds he had received at Dalkeith, and his shame at having been obliged to fly before his conqueror, opened a path to the elevation of Aymer de Valence.—And when he was named viceroy in the stead of De Warenne, he told Edward, as a first measure, that, if he would authorize him to offer an earldom, with adequate estates, to Sir John Monteith, the old friend of Wallace; he was sure so rapacious a chieftain, would traverse sea and land to put that formidable Scot into the hands of England. To incline Edward to the proffer of so large a bribe, De Valence instanced Monteith's having volunteered, while he commanded with Sir Eustace Maxwell on the borders, to betray the forces under him to the English general. The treachery was accepted; and for its execution he received a casket of uncounted gold. Some other proofs of his devotion to England, were

mentioned by De Valence. "You mean his devotion to money!" replied the King; "and if that will make him ours at this crisis, give him overflowing coffers, but no earldom!—Though I must have the head of Wallace, I would not have one of my peers shew a title written in his blood. Ill deeds, must sometimes be done; but we do not emblazon their perpetrators!"

De Valence having received his credentials, sent Haliburton (a Scottish prisoner, who bought his liberty too dear by such an embassage,) to impart to Sir John Monteith the King of England's proposal. Monteith was then castellan of Newark, where he had kept close for many months, under a pretence of the re-opening of old wounds; but the fact was, his treasons were connected with so many accomplices, that he feared some disgraceful disclosure; and therefore kept out of the way of exciting public attention. Avarice was his master-passion;

and his suspicions that there was treasure in the iron box, which, he had, unwitting of such a circumstance, consigned to Wallace, first shewed to him his idolatary of gold. His murmurs for having allowed the box to leave his possession, gave the alarm which caused the disasters at Ellerslie, and his own immediate imprisonment. The lieutenant at Lanerk, after the death of Heselrigge, sent Monteith, then his prisoner, towards Stirling, for Cressingham to punish according to his pleasure. Sir John made his escape from the party that conveyed him, but fell into Soulis's hands. That inhuman chieftain threatened to return him to his dungeons; and to avoid such a misfortune, Monteith engaged in the conspiracy to bring Lady Helen from the priory to the arms of this monster. On her escape, Soulis would have wreaked his vengeance on his vile emissary, by surrendering him to his enemies; but Monteith, aware of his design, fled—and fled even into the

danger he would have avoided. He fell in with a roaming party of Southrons, who conveyed him to Ayr. His short sojourn with Soulis had plunged his soul deep in guilt. Once having immolated his honour, he kept no terms with conscience. Arnulf soon understood what manner of man was in his custody; and by sharing with him the pleasures of his table, and certain divisions of the plunder that was daily brought in, soon drew from him every information respecting the strength and resources of his country. His after-history, was a series of secret treacheries to Scotland; and in return for them, an accumulation of wealth from England; the contemplation of which seemed to be his sole enjoyment. This new offer of De Valence's, was therefore greedily embraced. He happened to be at Rutherglen when Haliburton brought the proposal; and in the cloisters of its[n] church was its fell agreement signed. He transmitted an oath to De Valence, that he

would die or win his hire:—and having dispatched spies to the camp at Roslyn, as soon as he was informed of Wallace's disappearance, he judged, from his knowledge of that chief's retentive affections, that whithersoever he intended finally to go, he would first visit Ellerslie and the tomb of his wife. According to this opinion, he planted his emissaries in favourable situations on the road; and then proceeded to intercept his victim, at the probable places.

Not finding him at Bothwell, he was just issuing forth to take the way to Ellerslie, when the object of his search presented himself at the opening of the wood.

Triumphant in his deceit, this master of hypocrisy left the barn in which he had seen Wallace and his young friend lie down on that ground from which he had determined they should never more arise. Aware that the unconquerable soul of Wallace would never allow himself to be taken alive, he had stipulated with

De Valence, that the delivery of his head should entitle him to a full reward. From Rutherglen to Lumloch, no place had presented itself, in which, he thought he could judiciously plant an ambuscade to surprise the unsuspecting Wallace. But in this village, he had stationed so large a force of ruthless savages, (brought, for this purpose, by Haliburton, from the Irish Island of Rathlin,) that their employer had hardly a doubt of this night being the last of his too-trusting friend's existence. These Rathliners, neither knew of Wallace, nor his exploits; but the lower order of Scots, however they might fear to succour his distress, loved his person, and felt so bound to him by his actions, that Monteith durst not apply to any one of them to second his villany.

The hour of midnight had passed, and yet he could not summon courage to lead his men to their nefarious attack. Twice they urged him, before he arose from his affected sleep: but guilt had *murdered*

sleep! and he lay awake, restless, and longing for the dawn:—and yet, ere that dawn, the deed must be accomplished, which was to entitle him to half the treasury of King Edward! A cock crew from a neighbouring farm. "That is the sign of morning, and we have yet done nothing!" exclaimed a surly ruffian, who leaned on his battle-axe in an opposite corner of the apartment. "No, it is the signal of our enemy's captivity!" cried Monteith,—"Follow me; but gently. If ye speak a word; or a single target rattles, before ye all fall upon him, we are lost!—It is a being of supernatural might, and not a mere man whom you go to encounter.—He that first disables him, shall have a double reward."

"Depend upon us," returned they; and stealing cautiously out of the cottage, advanced with a noiseless step towards the barn. Monteith paused at the door; making a sign to his men, to halt, while he listened.—He put his ear to a crevice:

not a murmur was heard within. He gently raised the latch, and setting the door wide open, with his finger on his lip, beckoned his followers. Without venturing to draw a breath, they approached the threshold. The meridian moon shone full into the hovel, and shed a broad light upon their victims. The innocent face of Edwin, rested on the bosom of his friend; and the arm of Wallace, lay on the straw, with which he had covered the tender body of his companion. So fair a picture of mortal friendship, was never before beheld. But the hearts were blind which looked on it; and Monteith giving the signal, he retreated out of the door while his men rushed forward to bind Wallace as he lay; but the first, in his eagerness, striking his head against a joist in the roof, uttered a fierce oath. The noise roused Wallace, whose wakeful senses had rather slumbered than slept, and opening his eyes, he sprang on his feet. A moment told him enemies were

around.—Seeing him rise, they precipitated themselves towards him with imprecations. His eyes blazed like two terrible meteors; and with a sudden motion of his arm, he seemed to hold the men at a distance, while his god-like figure stood, a tower, in collected might. Awe-struck, they paused; but it was only for an instant. The sight of Edwin, now starting from his sleep; his aghast countenance, as he felt for his weapons; his cry, when he recollected they were gone; inspired the assassins with fresh courage. Battle-axes, swords, and rattling chains, now flashed before the eyes of Wallace. The pointed steel in a hundred places entered his body, while, with part of a broken bench which chanced to lie near him, he defended himself and Edwin from this merciless host. Edwin, seeing nought but the death of his friend, flitting before his sight; regardless of himself, made a spring from his side, and snatched a dagger from the belt of one of the murderers.

The ruffian instantly caught the intrepid boy by the throat; and in that horrible clutch, would certainly have deprived him of life, had not the lion grasp of Wallace seized the man in his arms, and with a pressure that made his mouth and nostrils burst with blood, compelled him to forego his hold. Edwin released, Wallace dropped his assailant; who, staggering a few paces, fell senseless to the ground, and instantly expired.

The conflict now became doubly desperate.—Edwin's dagger, twice defended the breast of his friend. Two of the assassins, he stabbed to the heart.—"Murder that urchin!" cried Monteith; who seeing, from without, the carnage of his men, feared that Wallace might yet make his escape. "Hah!" cried Wallace, at the sound of Monteith's voice giving such an order;—"Then we are betrayed—but not by Heaven!—Strike, one of you, that angel youth," cried he, "and you will incur damnation!"—He spoke to the

winds. They poured towards Edwin. Wallace, with a giant's strength, dispersed them as they advanced: the beam of wood fell on the heads, and struck the breasts of his assailants. Himself, bleeding at every pore, felt not a smart while yet he defended Edwin. But a shout was heard from the door: a faint cry was heard at his side.—He looked around.—Edwin lay extended on the ground with an arrow quivering in his heart: his closing eyes still looked upwards to his friend. The beam fell from the hands of Wallace. He threw himself on his knees beside him. The dying boy, pressing his hand to his heart, dropped his head upon his bosom. ——Wallace moved not, spoke not. His hand was bathed in the blood of his friend, but not a pulse beat beneath it; no breath warmed the paralyzed chill of his face, as it hung over the motionless head of Edwin.

The men, more terrified at this unresisting stillness, than at the invincible prowess of his arm, stood gazing on him

in mute wonder. But Monteith, in whom the fell appetite of avarice had destroyed every perception of humanity, sent in other ruffians with new orders to bind Wallace. They approached him with terror: two of the strongest, stealing behind him, and taking advantage of his face being bent upon that of his murdered Edwin, each in the same moment seized his hands. As they griped them fast, and others advanced eagerly to fasten the bands, he looked calmly up; but it was a dreadful calm; it spoke of despair; of the full completion of all woe.—" Bring chains," cried one of the men, " he will burst these thongs."

" You may bind me with a hair;" said he; " I contend no more." The bonds were fastened on his wrists; and then turning towards the lifeless body of Edwin, he raised it gently in his arms. The rosy red of youth, yet tinged his cold cheek: his parted lips, still beamed with a smile; but the breath that had so sweetly in-

formed them, was flown.—"O! my best brother that ever I had!" cried he, in a sudden transport, and kissing his pale forehead; "My sincere friend in my greatest need! In thee was truth, manhood, and nobleness; in thee was all man's fidelity, with woman's tenderness. My friend, my brother, Oh! would to God I had died for thee!"(°)

CHAP. XIII.

LORD Ruthven was yet musing in fearful anxiety on Wallace's solemn adieu, and the confirmation, which, the recitals of Grimsby and Hay, had brought of his determined exile; when he was struck with new consternation, by the flight of his son.—A billet, which Edwin had left

with Scrymgeour, who guessed not its contents, told his father that he was gone to seek their friend, and to unite himself for ever with his fortunes.

Bothwell, not less eager to preserve Wallace to the world; with an intent to persuade him, at least, to abandon his monastic project, lost not an hour; but set off, from the nearest port, direct for France; hoping to arrive before his friend; and to engage the French monarch, to assist in preventing so grievous a sacrifice. Ruthven, meanwhile; fearful that the unarmed Wallace, and the self-regardless Edwin, might fall into the hands of the venal wretches, now widely dispersed to seize the chief and his adherents; sent out the Lanerkers (eager to embrace the service) in different parties, and in divers disguises, to pursue the roads it was probable he might take, and finding him, guard him safely to the coast. Till Ruthven should receive accounts of their success, he forbore to forward the letter,

which Wallace had left for Bruce; or to increase the solicitude of the already anxious inhabitants of Hunting tower, with any intimation of what had happened. But on the fourth day, Scrymgeour and his party returned with the horrible narrative of Lumloch.

Wallace, after the murder of his youthful friend, had been loaded with irons, and conveyed, so unresistingly, that he seemed in a stupor, on board a vessel to be carried immediately to the tower of London to receive sentence of death.—Sir John Monteith, though he never ventured into his sight, attended as the false witness, who, to put a vizard on cruelty, was to swear away his life. The horror and grief of Ruthven at these tidings, were unutterable: and Scrymgeour, to turn the tide of the bereaved father's thoughts, to the inspiring recollection of the early glory of his son, proceeded to narrate,—that he found the beauteous remains in the hovel, but bedecked with

flowers by the village girls. They were weeping over it, and lamenting the pitiless heart which could slay such youth and loveliness. To bury him in so obscure a spot, Scrymgeour would not allow; and he sent Stephen Ireland, with the sacred corse to Dumbarton, with orders, to see him entombed in the chapel of that fortress.—"It is done," continued the worthy knight, "and those towers, he so bravely scaled, will stand for ever the monument of Edwin Ruthven!" This wound struck deep into the heart of the father.—He felt it in his soul, but he did not complain. "Scrymgeour," said he, "the shafts fall thick upon us, but we must fulfil our duty." Cautious of inflicting too heavy a blow on the fortitude of his wife and Helen, he commanded Grimsby and Hay to withhold from every body at Hunting tower, the tidings of its young lord's fate; and then he dispatched them with the letter of Wallace to Bruce, and the dreadful information of Mon-

teith's treachery. Ruthven ended his short epistle to his wife, by saying, he should soon follow his messenger, but that at present he could not bring himself to entirely abandon the lowlands to even a temporary empire of the seditious chiefs.

On Grimsby's arrival at Hunting tower, he was conducted immediately to Bruce. The delirium had only left him that morning; and though weak and lying on his couch, he was contending with Ercildown, that he should be able to set out for Wallace's camp on the following day, when Grimsby entered the room. The countenance of the honest Southron was the harbinger of his news. Lady Helen started from her seat, and Bruce, stretching out his arm, eagerly caught the packets which Grimsby presented. Isabella, reading her sister's anxiety in her looks, inquired if all were well with Sir William Wallace? But ere he could make any answer, Lady Ruthven ran breathless into the room,

holding out an open letter, which Hay had delivered to her.—Bruce had just read the first line which announced the captivity of Wallace, and with a cry, which pierced through the souls of every one present, he made an attempt to spring from the couch; but in the act he reeled, and fell back insensible. The apprehensive heart of Helen guessed some direful explanation: she looked with speechless inquiry upon her aunt and Grimsby. Isabella and Ercildown hastened to Bruce, and Lady Ruthven, being too much alarmed in her own feelings to remark the aghast countenance of Helen, read to her from Lord Ruthven's letter, the brief but decisive account of Wallace's dangerous situation. Helen listened without a word: her heart seemed locked within her, that it should utter no sound; her brain was on fire; and gazing fixedly on the floor, all that was transacted around her passed unnoticed.

Insensibility did not long shackle the

determined Bruce. The energy of his spirit, struggling to gain the side of Wallace, in this his extremest need, (for he well knew Edward's implacable soul) roused him from his swoon.—With his extended arms dashing away the restoratives, with which both Isabella and Ercildown hung over him, he would have sprung on the floor, had not the latter held him down. "Withhold me not!" cried he, with a fierce countenance, "this is not the time for sickness and indulgence. My friend is in the fangs of the tyrant, and shall I lie here?—No, not for all the empires in the globe, will I be detained another hour."

Isabella, affrighted at the furies which raged in his eyes, but yet more terrified at the perils attendant on his desperate resolution, threw herself at his feet, and implored him to stay for her sake. "No;" cried Bruce, forgetful of every selfish wish, in the sovereign passion of his soul-devoted gratitude to William Wallace;

"not for thy life, Isabella, which is dearer to me than my own! Not to save this ungrateful country from the doom it merits! would I linger one moment from the side of him, who has fought, bled, and suffered for me and mine—who is now treated with ignominy, and sentenced to die for my delinquency!—Had I consented to proclaim myself on my landing, secure with Bruce the king, envy would have feared to strike:—but I must first win a fame like his!—And while I lay here, they tore him from the vain and impotent Bruce! But, Almighty pardoner of my sins!" cried he with vehemence, "grant me strength to wrest him from their gripe, and I will go barefoot to Palestine to utter all my gratitude!"

These thoughts created such a tempest in the breast of the prince, that Isabella sunk weeping into the arms of her aunt. And the venerable Ercildown, wishing to curb an impetuosity, which might only involve its generous agent in a ruin deep-

er than that it sought to revenge; with more zeal than judgment, urged to the prince, the danger into which such boundless resentment would precipitate his own person. At this intimation, the impassioned Bruce, stung to the soul that such an argument could be expected to have any weight with him, solemnly bent his knee, and clasping his sword, vowed before Heaven "either to release Wallace or——" to share his fate! he would have added; but Isabella, watchful of his words, suddenly interrupted him by throwing herself wildly on his neck, and exclaiming—"Oh! say not so! Rather swear to pluck the tyrant from his throne; that the sceptre of my Bruce, may bless England, as it will yet do this unhappy land!" "She says right!" ejaculated Ercildown in a prophetic transport; "and the sceptre of Bruce, in the hands of his offspring, shall bless the united countries to the latest generations! The walls of separation shall then be

thrown down, and England and Scotland be one people."(P)

Bruce looked stedfastly on the sage: "Then, if thy voice utter holy verity, it will not again deny my call to wield the power that Heaven bestows! I follow my fate! To-morrow's dawn sees me in the path to snatch my best treasure, my counsellor, my guide, from the judgment of his enemies:—or, woe to England; and to all of Scotland born, who have breathed one hostile word against his sacred life!—Helen, dost thou hear me?" cried he: "Wilt thou not assist me to persuade thy too timid sister, that her Bruce's honour, his happiness, lives in the preservation of his friend? Speak to her, counsel her, sweet Helen; and please the Almighty arm of Heaven, I will reward thy tenderness with the return of Wallace!"

Helen gazed intently at him as he spoke. She smiled when he ended, but she did not answer; and there was a wild

vacancy in the smile, that seemed to say, she knew not what had been spoken, and that her thoughts were far away. Without further regarding him, or any who were present, she arose and left the room. At this moment of fearful abstraction, her whole soul was bent, with an intensity that touched on madness, on the execution of a project, which had rushed into her mind in the moment she heard of Wallace's deathful captivity.

The approach of night favoured her design. Hurrying to her chamber, she dismissed her maids with the prompt excuse, that she was ill, and desired not to be disturbed till morning; then bolting her door, she quickly habited herself in the page's cloaths, which she had so carefully preserved as the dear memorial of her happy days in France; and dropping from her window into the park beneath, ran swiftly, through its woody precincts, towards Dundee.

Before she arrived at the suburbs of

Perth, her tender feet became so blistered, that she found the necessity of stopping at the first cottage. Her perturbed spirits rendered it impossible for her to take rest; and she answered the hospitable offer of its humble owner, with a request, that he would go into the town, and immediately purchase a horse to carry her that night to Dundee. She put her purse into the man's hand; and he, being willing to serve the young traveller in whatever way he pleased, without further discussion obeyed. When the animal was brought, and the honest Scot returned her the purse with its remaining contents, she divided them with him; and turning from his thanks in silence, mounted her horse and rode away.

About an hour before dawn, she arrived within view of the ships lying in the harbour at Dundee. At this sight she threw herself off the panting animal, which she had urged to its utmost speed, and leaving it to rest and liberty, hastened to the

beach. A gentle breeze blew freshly from the north-west; and several vessels, at that moment, were heaving their anchors to get under weigh. "Are any," demanded she, "bound for the Tower of London?"—"None," was the reply. Despair was now in her heart and gesture. But suddenly recollecting, that in dressing herself for her flight, she had not taken off the jewels, her usual ornaments, she exclaimed with renovated hope, "Will not gold tempt you to carry me thither?" A rough Norwegian sailor jumped from the side of the nearest vessel, and readily answered in the affirmative. "My life," rejoined she, "or a necklace of pearls, shall be yours in the moment you land me at the Tower of London." The man, seeing the youth and agitation of the seeming boy who accosted him, doubted his power to perform so magnificent a promise, and was half inclined to retract his assent; but Helen pointing to a

jewel on her finger, as a proof that she did not speak of things beyond her reach, he no longer hesitated; and pledging his word that, wind and tide in his favour, he would land her at the Tower-stairs;—she, as if all happiness must meet her at that point, sprang into his vessel. The sails were unfurled; the voices of the men, chanted forth their cheering responses, on clearing the harbour, and Helen, throwing herself along the floor of her little cabin, in that prostration of body and soul, silently breathed her thanks to God, for being indeed launched on the ocean, whose waves, she trusted, would soon convey her to Wallace.

CHAP. XIV.

AFTER a tedious procrastination, occasioned by several calms, on the evening of the fourteenth day from the one in which Helen had embarked, the little ship of Dundee, entered on the bright bosom of the Nore. While she sat on the deck, watching the progress of the vessel with an eager spirit, which would gladly have taken wings to have flown to the object of her voyage, she first saw the majestic waters of the Thames. But it was a tyrannous flood to her; and she marked not the diverging shores crowned with palaces; her eyes looked over every marbled dome, to seek the black summits of the Tower. At a certain point, the captain of the vessel spoke through his trumpet, to summon a pilot from the

land.—In a few minutes he was obeyed. The Englishman took the helm. Helen was reclined on a coil of ropes near him. He entered into conversation with the Norwegian; and she listened in speechless attention to a recital which bound up her every sense in that of hearing. The captain, who declared his place of birth, and in consequence of his seafaring life a Scot by appellation only, jested on the present troubles of his adoptive country; and added, " that he thought any ruler the right one, who gave him a free course for traffick."—In answer to this remark, the Englishman, with an observation, not very flattering to the Norwegian's estimation of right and wrong, mentioned the capture of the once renowned champion of Scotland, and narrated its consequence. Even the enemy, who recounted the particulars, shewed a ruth in the recital, which shamed the man who had benefited by the patriotism he affected to despise,

and for which, Sir William Wallace was now likely to shed his blood.

"I was present," continued the pilot, "when the brave Scot was put on the raft, which carried him through the traitor's gate into the Tower. His hands and feet were bound with iron; but his head, owing to faintness from the wounds he had received at Lumloch, was so bent down on his breast as he reclined on the float, that I could not then see his face. —There was a great pause: for none of us, when he did appear in sight, could shout over the downfal of so merciful a conqueror. Many were spectators of this scene, whose lives he had spared on the fields of Scotland; and my brother was amongst them. However, that I might have a distinct view of the man who has so long held our warlike monarch in dread, I went to Westminster-hall on the day appointed for his trial. The great judges of the land, and almost all

the lords besides, were there; and a very grand spectacle they made. But when the hall door was opened, and the dauntless prisoner appeared, then it was that I saw true majesty; King Edward on his throne, never looked with such a royal air. His very chains seemed given to be graced by him, as he moved through the parting crowd, with the step of one, who had been used to have all his accusers at his feet. Though pale with loss of blood, and his countenance bore traces of the suffering occasioned by the state of his yet unhealed wounds, his head was now erect, and he looked with undisturbed dignity on all around. The Earl of Gloucester, whose life and liberty he had granted at Berwick, sat on the right of the lord chancellor. Bishop Beck, the lords de Valence and Soulis, with one Monteith, (who it seems was the man that betrayed him into our hands,) charged him with high treason against the life of King Edward, and the peace of his

Majesty's realms of England and Scotland. Grievous, were the accusations brought against him; and bitter the revilings with which he was denounced as a traitor too mischievous to deserve any shew of mercy. The Earl of Gloucester, who had several times attempted to stem the headlong fury of their several depositions, at last rose indignantly, and in energetic and respectful terms implored Sir William Wallace, by the reverence in which he held the tribunal of future ages, to answer for himself.

"'*On this adjuration, brave earl!*' replied he, '*I will.*'—O! men of Scotland, what a voice was that! In it was all honesty and nobleness! and a murmur arose from some who feared its power, which Gloucester was obliged to check, by exclaiming aloud, with a stern countenance,—'Silence while Sir William Wallace speaks. He who disobeys shall be committed prisoner to the sergeant at arms.' A pause succeeded; and the

chieftain, with the godlike majesty of truth, denied the possibility of being a traitor where he never owed allegiance; but with a matchless fearlessness, he avowed the facts alledged against him in the accusations which told the havoc he had made of the English on the Scottish plains, and the devastations he had afterwards wrought in the lands of England. 'It was a son,' cried he, 'defending the orphans of his father, from the steel and rapine of a treacherous friend! It was the sword of restitution, gathering on his fields, the harvests he had ravaged from theirs!' He spoke more, and nobly; too nobly for them who heard him. They rose to a man, to silence what they could not confute;—and the sentence of death was pronounced on him;—the cruel death of a traitor!(q) The Earl of Gloucester turned pale on his seat, but the countenance of Wallace was unmoved. As he was led forth, I followed; and saw the young Le de Spencer, and several other

reprobate gallants of our court, ready to receive him. With shameful mockery they threw laurels on his head, and with torrents of derision, told him, that it was meet they should so salute the champion of Scotland![r] Wallace glanced on them a look, which spoke pity rather than contempt; and with a serene countenance, he followed the warden towards the Tower. The hirelings of his accusers, loaded him with invectives as he passed along: but the people who beheld his noble mien, and who had heard of, and many felt, his generous virtues, deplored and wept his hard sentence. To-morrow, at sunrise, he dies."

Helen's face being over-shadowed by the feathers of her hat, the agony of her mind could not have been read in her countenance, had the good Southron been sufficiently uninterested in his story to regard the sympathy of others; but as soon as the dreadful words "to-morrow, at sunrise, he dies," fell on her ear, she

started from her seat; her horror-struck senses apprehended nothing further, and turning to the Norwegian, "Captain," cried she, "I must reach the Tower this night!" "Impossible," was the reply; "the tide will not take us up till to-morrow at noon." "Then the waves must!" cried she, and frantickly rushing towards the ship's side, she would have thrown herself into the water had not the pilot caught her arm. "Boy!" said he, "are you mad? your action, your looks—" "No;" interrupted she, wringing her hands; "but in the Tower I must be this night, or—Oh! God of mercy, end my misery!" The unutterable anguish of her voice, countenance, and gesture, excited a suspicion in the Englishman that this youth was connected with the Scottish chief; and not chusing to, even, hint his surmise to the unfeeling Norwegian, in a different tone he exhorted Helen to composure, and offered her his own boat, which was then towed at the

side of the vessel, to take her to the Tower. Helen grasped the pilot's rough hand, and in a paroxysm of gratitude pressed it to her lips; then, forgetful of her engagements with the insensible man who stood unmoved by his side, sprang into the boat. The Norwegian followed her, and in a threatening tone demanded his hire. She now recollected it; and putting her hand into her vest, gave him the string of pearls which had been her necklace. He was satisfied, and the boat pushed off.

The cross, the hallowed pledge of her chaste communion with Wallace in the chapel of Snawdoun, and which always hung suspended on her bosom, was now in her hand, and pressed close to her heart. The rowers plied their oars: and her eyes, with a gaze as if they would pierce the horizon, looked intently onward as the men laboured through the tide. Even to see the walls which contained Wallace, seemed to promise her a

degree of comfort, she dared hardly hope she was fated to enjoy. At last the awful battlements of England's state-prison rose before her. She could not mistake them. "That is the Tower," said one of the rowers. A shriek escaped her; and instantly covering her face with her hands, she tried to shut from her sight those very walls she had so long sought amongst the clouds. They imprisoned Wallace! He groaned within their confines! and their presence paralyzed her heart.

"Shall I die before I reach thee, Wallace!" was the question which her almost flitting soul uttered, as she trembling, yet with swift step, ascended the stone stairs which led from the water's edge to the entrance of the Tower. She flew through the different courts to the one in which stood the prison of Wallace. One of the boatmen, being bargeman to the governor of the Tower, as well as rower to the pilot, as a privileged person conducted

Helen unmolested through every ward, till she reached the place of her destination. There she dismissed him, with a ring from her finger as his reward; and passing a body of soldiers which kept guard before a large porch that led to the dungeons, she entered, and found herself in an immense paved room. A single sentinel stood at the end, near to an iron grating or small portcullis. There, then, was Wallace! Forgetting her disguise and situation in the frantic eagerness of her pursuit, she hastily advanced to the man:—" Let me pass to Sir William Wallace," cried she, " and treasures shall be your reward!" " Whose treasures? my pretty page;" demanded the soldier; " I dare not, were it at the suit of the Countess of Gloucester herself." " O!" cried Helen; " for the sake of a greater than any countess in this land, take this jewelled bracelet, and let me pass!"

The man, misapprehending the words of this adjuration, at sight of the dia-

monds, supposing the page must come from the queen, no longer demurred; and putting the bracelet into his bosom, told Helen, that, as he granted this permission at the risk of his life, she must conceal herself in the interior chamber of the prisoner's dungeons, should any from the warden visit him during their interview. She readily promised this: and he informed her, that, when through this door, she would cross two other apartments, the bolts to the entrances of which she must undraw; and then, at the extremity of a long passage, a door, fastened by a latch, would admit her to Sir William Wallace. With these words the soldier removed the massy bars, and Helen entered.

CHAP. XV.

HELEN's fleet steps carried her in a few minutes, through the intervening dungeons, to the door which would restore to her eyes the being with whose life her existence seemed blended. The bolts had yielded to her hands. The iron latch now gave way, and the ponderous oak grating dismally on its hinges, she looked forward, and beheld the object of all her solicitude, leaning along a couch; a stone table was before him, at which he seemed writing. He raised his head at the sound. The peace of virtue was in his eyes; and a smile on his lips, as if he had expected some angel visitant.

The first glance of his pale but heavenly countenance, struck to the heart of

Helen; veneration, anguish, shame, all rushed on her at once. She was in his presence! but how might he turn from consolations, he had not sought! The intemperate passion of her step-mother now glared before her: his contempt of the Countess's unsolicited advances, appeared ready to be extended to her rash daughter-in-law; and with an irrepressible cry, which seemed to breathe out her life, Helen would have fled; but her failing limbs bent under her, and she fell senseless into the dungeon. Wallace started from his reclining position. He thought his senses must deceive him,—and yet the shriek was Lady Helen's! He had heard the same cry on the Pentland hills; in the chamber of chateau Galliard! He arose agitated; he approached the prostrate youth, and bending to his inanimate form, took off the plumed hat; he parted the heavy locks which fell over the face, and recognised the features of her who, alone, had ever

shared his meditations with Marion. He sprinkled water on her face and hands: he touched her cheek; it was ashy cold, and the chill struck to his heart. "Helen!" exclaimed he; "Helen, awake! Speak to thy friend!"

Still she was motionless. "Dead!" cried he, with increased emotion; "Gone so soon!—Gone to tell Marion, that her Wallace comes. Blessed angel!" cried he clasping her to his breast, with an energy of which he was not aware, "take me, take me with thee!" The pressure, the voice, roused the dormant life of Helen. With a torturing sigh she unsealed her eyes from the death-like load that oppressed them, and found herself in the arms of Wallace.

All her wandering senses, which from the first promulgation of his danger, had been kept in a bewildered state, now rallied, and in recovered sanity smote her to the soul. Though still overwhelmed with grief, at the fate which threatened to tear

him from her and life, she now wondered how she could ever have so trampled on the retreating modesty of her nature, as to have brought herself thus into his presence: and in a voice of horror, of despair; believing that she had for ever destroyed herself in his opinion, she exclaimed, "Father of Heaven! how came I here?—I am lost, and innocently;—but who can read the heart?"

She lay in hopeless misery on his breast, with her eyes again closed, almost unconscious of the pillow on which she leaned. "Lady Helen," returned he, hardly comprehending her, "was it other than Wallace, you sought in these dungeons? I dared to think, that the parent we both adore had sent you hither, to be his harbinger of consolation!" Helen, recalled to self-possession by the kindness of these words, turned her head on his bosom, and in a burst of grateful tears hardly articulated, "And will you not abhor me for this act of madness? But I was not

myself. And yet, where should I live or die, but at the feet of my benefactor?" The stedfast soul of Wallace was subdued by this language, and the manner of its utterance. It was the disinterested dictates of a pure, though agitated spirit, which, he now was convinced, did most exclusively love him, but with the passion of an angel; and the tears of a sympathy, which spoke their kindred natures, stole from his eyes as he bent his cheek on her head. She felt them; and rejoicing in such an assurance that she yet possessed his esteem, a blessed calm diffused itself over her mind, and raising herself, with a look of virtuous confidence she exclaimed, "Then you do understand me, Wallace? you pardon me, this apparent forgetfulness of my sex; and you recognise a true sister in Helen Mar? I may administer to that noble heart till——" She paused, turned deadly pale, and then clasping his hand in both hers to her lips, in bitter agony added, "till we meet in heaven!"

"And blissful, dearest saint, will be our union there," replied he, "where soul meets soul, unencumbered of these earthly fetters; and mingles with each other, even as thy tender tear-drops now glide into mine! But there, my Helen, we shall never weep. No heart will be left unsatisfied; no spirit will mourn in unrequited love; for that happy region, is the abode of love:—of love without the defilements, or the disquietudes of mortality; for there, it is an everlasting, pure enjoyment. It is a full diffusive tenderness, which, penetrating all hearts, unites the whole in one spirit of boundless love in the bosom of our God!"

"Ah!" cried Helen, throwing herself on her knees in holy enthusiasm; "join then your prayers with mine, most revered of friends, that I may be admitted into such blessedness! Petition our God, to forgive me; and do you forgive me, that I have sometimes envied the love you bear your Marion! But I now love her

so entirely, that to be her and your ministering spirit in Paradise, would amply satisfy my soul."—" O! Helen," cried Wallace, grasping her uplifted hands in his, and clasping them to his heart, " thy soul and Marion's are indeed one, and as one I love ye!"

This unlookèd for declaration almost overpowered Helen in its flood of happiness; and with a smile, which seemed to picture the very heavens opening before her, she turned her eyes from him to the crucifix which stood on the table, and bowing her head on its pedestal, was lost in the devotion of rapturous gratitude.

At this juncture, when, perhaps, the purest bliss that ever descended on woman's heart, now glowed in that of Helen's, the Earl of Gloucester entered. His were not visits of consolation; for he knew that his friend, who had built his heroism on the rock of Christianity, did not require the comfortings of any mortal hand. At sight of him, Wallace, pointing to the

kneeling Helen, beckoned him into the inner cell, where his straw pallet lay; and there, in a low voice, declared who she was; and requested the earl, to use his authority to allow her to remain with him to the last. " After that," said he, " I rely on you, generous Gloucester, to convey safely back to her country, a being, who seems to have nothing of earth about her, but the terrestrial body which enshrines her angelic soul."

The sound of a voice speaking with Wallace, aroused Helen from her happy trance. Alarmed that it might be the horrid emissaries of the tyrant, come, prematurely, to tear him from her, she started on her feet; " Where are you, Wallace?" cried she looking distractedly around her; " I must be with you, even in death!"

Wallace, hearing her fearful cry, hastened into the dungeon, and relieved her immediate terror, by naming the Earl of Gloucester, who followed him. The con-

viction that Wallace was under mortal sentence, which the idea of his eternal bliss, had almost obliterated, now rushed upon her with redoubled horrors. This world, again rose before her in the person of Gloucester. It reminded her, that she and Wallace were not yet passed into the hereafter, whose anticipated joys had wrapt her in such sweet elysium. He had yet the bitter cup of death to drink to the dregs; and all of human weakness again writhed in her breast. "And is there no hope?" cried she, looking earnestly on the disturbed face of Gloucester; "Ah! conduct me to this lawless king! If tears, if a breaking heart can avail, I will kneel before him; I will die before him; only let Sir William Wallace live!"

"Dearest sister of my soul!" cried Wallace, throwing his arms around her agitated figure, "thy knees shall never bend to any, less than God, for me! Did He will my longer pilgrimage on this

earth, of which my spirit is already weary, it would not be in the power of any human tyrant to hold me in these bonds. I am content to go, my Helen; and angels whisper me, that thy bridal bed will be William Wallace's grave!" She spoke not, but at this assurance, looked up to him with a blush of strange delight;—with such delight, the vestal consigns herself to the cloister: with such delight, the widowed mourner lays her head to rest in the tomb of him she loved. —But with such delight, none are acquainted, who know not what it is to be wedded to the soul of a beloved being, when the body, which was once its vestment, lies mouldering in the earth.

Gloucester contemplated this chaste union of two spotless hearts, with an admiration almost amounting to devotion. "Gentle lady," said he, "the message that I came to impart to Sir William Wallace, bears with it a shew of hope; and I trust, that your tender

spirit will be as persuasive, as consolatory. A private embassy has just arrived in haste from France, to negociate, with King Edward, for the safety of our friend, as a prince of that realm. I left the embassadors," continued he, turning to the Scottish chief, " in vehement debate with his Majesty; and he has at length granted a suspension, or a repeal, of the horrible injustice that was to be completed to-morrow, on condition of your accordance with, or refusal of certain proposals, which are to be laid before you.—Accept them, and Edward will comply with all King Philip's demands in your behalf."

" And you will accept them?" cried Helen, in a tumult of wild hope. The communication of Gloucester had made no change in the equable pulse of Wallace; and he replied, with a look of tender pity upon her animated countenance, " The conditions of Edward, are too likely to be snares for that honour, which I will bear with me uncontaminated to

the grave. Therefore, dearest consoler of my last hours, do not give way to hopes, which a greater King than Edward may command me to disappoint." Helen bowed her head in silence. The colour again faded from her cheek, and despair once more seized on her heart.

Gloucester resumed; and after narrating some particulars concerning the conference between the King and the embassadors, (deeming it probable, that should Wallace even finally refuse the terms proposed to him, the circumstances of a negociation would at least very much prolong his sojourn in this world;) he suggested the impracticability of secretly retaining Lady Helen for any length of time, in the dungeon with him. "I dare not," continued he, "be privy to her presence here, and yet conceal it from the King. I know not what messengers he may send to impart his conditions to you; and should she be discovered, Edward, doubly incensed, would tear her

from you; and as an accessary, so involve me in his displeasure, that I should be disabled from serving either of you farther. Were I, so to honour his feelings as a man, as to mention it to him, I do not believe that he would oppose her wishes; but how to reveal such a circumstance, with any regard to her fair fame, I know not; for all are not sufficiently virtuous, to believe her spotless innocence." Helen, who had summoned all her strength at the intimation which threatened to separate her from Wallace, hastily interrupted Gloucester, and with firmness said, "When I entered these walls, the world and I parted for ever. The good, or the evil opinion, of the impure in heart, can never affect me:—they shall never see me more. The innocent will judge me by themselves, and by the end of my race. I came to minister, with a sister's duty, to my own and my father's preserver; and while he abides here, I will never consent to leave his feet. When he goes

hence, if it be to bless mankind again, I shall find the longest life too short to pour forth all my gratitude; and for that purpose, I will dedicate myself in some nunnery of my native land. But should he be taken from the world that is so unworthy of him, soon, very soon, shall I cease to feel its aspersions, in the grave."

"No aspersions which I can avert, dearest Helen," cried Wallace, "shall ever tarnish the fame of one, whose purity can only be transcended by her who is now made perfect in heaven! Consent, noblest of women, to wear for the few days I may yet linger here, a name, which thy sister angel has sanctified to me. Give me a legal right to call you mine, and Edward himself will not then dare to divide what God has joined together?"

Helen paused—even her heart seemed to cease its pulsation, in the awful moment.—Did she hear aright? and was she indeed going to invade the rights of the

Marion, she had so often vowed to regard as the sole object of Wallace's dearest wishes?—Oh, no; it was not the lover that shone in his luminous eyes; it was not the mistress that glowed in her bosom!—Words might be breathed; but no change would be wrought in the souls of them, who were already separated from the earth.—Helen, with these thoughts, turned towards Wallace; she attempted to answer, but the words died on the seraphic smile which beamed upon her lips, and she dropped her head upon his breast.

Gloucester, who saw no other means of ensuring to his friend the comfort of her society, was rejoiced at this resolution of Wallace: he had himself longed to propose it, but considering the peculiarities of their situation, knew not how to do so, without seeming to mock their sensibility and fate. But the proposal, he now saw made, on the principles of delicacy which actuated his own honourable mind; and

reading the consent of Helen, in the tender emotion which denied her speech; without further delay, as the hour was advancing towards midnight, he quitted the apartment, to bring the confessor of the warden, that he might witness the union of their hands before he should leave them for the night.

On his re-entrance, he found Helen sitting, dissolved in tears, with her hand clasped in his friend's. The sacred rite was soon performed, which endowed her with all the claims upon Wallace, which her devoted heart had so long contemplated with resigned hopelessness:—to be his help-mate on earth, his partner in the tomb, his dear companion in heaven! With the last benediction, she threw herself on her knees before him, and put his hand to her lips in eloquent silence. Gloucester, with a look of kind farewel, withdrew with the priest.

"Thou noble daughter of the noblest Scot!" said Wallace, raising her from

the ground, "this bosom is thy place, and not my feet. Long, it will not be given me to hold thee here: but even in the hours, or years, of our separation, my spirit will hover near thee, to bear thine to our everlasting home."

The heart of Helen alternately beat violently, and stopped, as if the vital currents were suddenly impeded. Hope and fear agitated her by turns; but clinging to the flattering prospect, which the arrival of the embassadors had excited; she timidly breathed a hope, that by the present interference of King Philip, Edward might not be found inexorable.

"Disturb not the holy composure of your soul by such an expectation," returned he; "I know my adversary too well, to anticipate his relinquishing the object of his vengeance, but at a price more infamous than the most ignoble death. Therefore, best beloved of all on earth! look for no deliverance for thy Wallace, but what passes through the

grave; and to me, dearest Helen, its gates are on golden hinges turning, for all is light and bliss which shines on me from within their courts!"

Helen's thoughts, in the idea of his being torn from her, could not wrest themselves from the direful images of his execution; she shuddered, and in faltering accents replied, "Ah! could we glide from sleep into so blessed a death, I would hail it, even for thee! But the threatened horrors, should they fall on thy sacred head, will in that hour, I trust, also divorce my soul from this grievous world!"

"Not so, my Helen," returned he; "keep not thy dear eyes for ever fixed on the gloomy appendages of death. The scaffold, and the grave, have nought to do with the immortal soul: it cannot be wounded by the one, nor confined by the other. And is not the soul, thy full and perfect Wallace? It is that which now speaks to thee, which will cherish thy

beloved idea for ever. Lament not, then, how soon this body, its mere apparel, is laid down in the dust. But rejoice still in my existence, which, through Him who *led captivity captive*, will never know a pause! Comfort then thy heart, my soul's dear sister, and sojourn a little while on this earth, to bear witness, for thy Wallace, to the friends he loves."

Helen, who felt the import of his words in her heart, gently bowed her head, and he proceeded:

"As the first who stemmed with me the torrent which, with God's help, we so often laid into a calm, I mention to you my faithful Lanerkers. Many of them bled, and died in the contest; and to their orphans, with the children of those who yet survive, I consign all of the world's wealth that yet belongs to William Wallace: Ellerslie and its estates are theirs.(s) —To Bruce, my sovereign and my friend, —the loved companion of the hour, in which I freed you, my Helen, from the

arms of violence! To him I bequeath this heart, knit to him by bonds, more dear than even loyalty. Bear it to him; and when he is summoned to his heavenly throne, then let his heart and mine fill up one urn. To Lord Ruthven, to Bothwell, to Scrymgeour, and Kirkpatrick, I give my prayers and blessings.—"

Here Wallace paused. Helen, who had listened to him with a holy attention, which hardly allowed a sigh to breathe from her stedfast heart, spoke; but the voice was scarcely audible:—"And what for him who loves you dearer than life? for Edwin? He cannot be forgotten!" Wallace started at this: then she was ignorant of the death of that too faithful friend! In a hurrying accent he replied, "Never forgotten! Oh! Helen! I asked for him life; and Heaven gave him long life, even for ever and ever!" Helen's eyes met his, with a look of awful inquiry: "That would mean, he is gone before you?" The countenance of Wal-

lace answered her. "Happy Edwin!" cried she, and the tears rained over her cheeks as she bent her head on her arm. Wallace continued; "He laid down his life, to preserve mine, in the hovel of Lumloch. The false Monteith, could get no Scot to lay hands on their true defender; and even the foreign ruffians, he brought to the task, might have spared the noble boy, but an arrow from the traitor himself pierced his heart. Contention was then no more, and I resigned myself to follow him."

"What a desert is the world become!" exclaimed Helen; then turning on Wallace with a saintlike smile, she added, "I would hardly now withhold you. You will bear him Helen's love, and tell him, how soon I will be with you.—If our Father will not allow my heart to break; in his mercy, he may take my soul in the prayers which I shall hourly breathe to him!" "Thou hast been lent me, as my sweet consolation here, my Helen;"

replied he; "and the Almighty dispenser of that comfort, will not long banish you from the object of your innocent wishes."

While they thus poured into each others bosoms the ineffable balm of friendship's purest tenderness, the eyes of Wallace insensibly closed. "Your gentle influence," gently murmured he, "brings that sleep to my eye-lids, which has not visited them since I first entered these walls. Like my Marion, Helen, thy presence brings healing on its wings." "Sleep, then," replied she, "and Marion's angel spirit will keep watch with mine."

CHAP. XVI.

THOUGH all the furies of the elements seemed let loose to rage around the walls of the dungeon, still Wallace slept in the loud uproar. Calm was within; and the warfare of the world could not disturb the balmy rest into which the angel of peace had steeped his senses. From this profound repose he was awakened by the entrance of Gloucester. Helen had just sunk into a light slumber; but the first words of the earl aroused her, and rising, she followed her beloved Wallace to his side.

He came by the King's order thus early, to shew his Majesty's readiness to comply with the wishes of his royal brother of France. Gloucester put a scroll into the hand of Wallace:—"Sign that," said he,

"and you are free. I know not its contents; but the King commissioned me, as a mark of his grace, to be the messenger of your release."

Wallace read the conditions, and the colour deepened on his cheek as his eye met each article. *He was to reveal the asylum of Bruce; to forswear Scotland for ever; and to take an oath of allegiance to Edward, the seal of which should be the English Earldom of Cleveland!* Wallace closed the parchment. "King Edward knows well what will be my reply; I need not speak it." "You will accept his terms?" asked the earl.

"Not to insure me a life of ages, with all earthly bliss my portion! I have spoken to these offers before. Read them, my noble friend; and then give him, as mine, the answer that would be yours." Gloucester obeyed; and while his eyes were bent on the parchment, those of Helen were fixed on her almost worshipped husband: she looked through his beaming

countenance, into his very soul; and there saw the sublime purpose that consigned his unbending head to the scaffold. When Gloucester had finished, covered with the burning blush of shame he crushed the disgraceful scroll in his hand; and exclaimed, with honourable vehemence, against the deep duplicity, and deeper cruelty of his father-in-law, so to mock, by base subterfuges, the embassy of France and its noble object.

"This is the morning in which I was to have met my fate!" replied Wallace. "Tell this tyrant of the earth, that I am even now ready to receive the last stroke of his injustice. In the peaceful grave, my Helen," added he, turning to her, who sat pale and aghast, "I shall be beyond his power!" Gloucester walked the room in great disturbance of mind, while Wallace continued, in a lowered tone, his attempts to recal some perception of his own consolations to the abstracted and soul-struck Helen. The earl stopped

suddenly before them: "That the King did not expect your acquiescence, without some hesitation, I cannot doubt; for he told me, when I informed him that the Lady Helen Mar, now your wife, was the sharer of your prison, that should you still oppose yourself to what he called your own interest, I must bring her to him, as the last means of persuading you to receive his mercy."

"Never!" replied Wallace; "I reject what he calls mercy. He has no rights of judgment over me; and his pretended mercy, is an assumption which, as a true born Scot, I despise. He may rifle me of my life, but he shall never beguile me into any acknowledgment of an authority that is false. No wife, nor ought of mine, with my consent, shall ever stand before him as a suppliant for William Wallace. I will die, as I have lived; the equal of Edward, in all things but a crown; and his superior, in being true to the glory of prince or peasant—unblemished honour!"

Finding the Scottish chief not to be shaken in this determination, Gloucester, humbled to the soul by the base tyranny of his royal father-in-law, soon after withdrew, to acquaint that haughty monarch with the ill-success of his embassy. But ere noon had turned, he re-appeared, with a countenance declarative of some distressing errand. He found Helen awakened to the full perception of all her pending evils—that she was on the eve of losing for ever, the object dearest to her in this world! and though she wept not, though she listened to the lord of all her wishes, with smiles of holy approval, her heart bled within; and with a welcome, which enforced his consolatory arguments, she hailed its mortal pains.

"I come," said Gloucester, "not to urge you to send Lady Helen as a suitor to King Edward; but to spare her the misery of being separated from you while life is yours." He then proceeded to relate, that the French embassadors knew

not the conditions which were offered to the object of their mission; but being informed that he had refused them, they still continue to press their sovereign's demands, with a power, which Edward seemed cautious to provoke; and, therefore, as a last proof of his desire to acquiesce in the wishes of Philip, he told the French lords, that he would send his final propositions to Sir William Wallace by that chieftain's wife, who he found was then his companion in the Tower. "On my intimating," continued the earl, "that I feared she would be unable to appear before him, his answer was:—Let her see to that: such refusal shall be answered by an immediate separation from her husband."

"Let me, in this demand," cried she, turning with collected firmness to Wallace, "satisfy the will of Edward. It is only to purchase my continuance with you. Trust me, noblest of men! I should be unworthy of the name you have given

me, could I sully it in my person, by one debasing word, or action, to the author of all our ills!" "Ah, my Helen!" replied he, "what is it you ask? Am I to live to see a repetition of the horrors of Ellerslie?" "No, on my life!" answered Gloucester; "my soul, in this instance, I would pledge for King Edward's manhood. His ambition might lead him to trample on all men; but still for woman, he feels as becomes a man and a knight."

Helen renewed her supplications; and Wallace, (aware, that should he withhold her attendance, his implacable adversary, however he might spare her personal injury, would not forbear wounding her to the soul by tearing her from him,) gave an unwilling consent, to what might seem a submission, on his part, to an authority he had shed his blood to oppose. "But not in these garments," said he, "must my Helen appear before the eyes of our enemy. She must be habited as becomes her sex and her own delicacy."

Anticipating this propriety, Gloucester had imparted the circumstance to his countess, and she had sent a casket, which the earl now brought in from the passage. Helen retired to the inner cell, and hastily arraying herself in the first suit that presented itself, re-appeared in female apparel, and wrapped in a long veil. As Gloucester took her hand to lead her forth, Wallace clasped the other in his, "Remember, my Helen," cried he, "that on no terms, but untrammelled freedom of soul, will your Wallace accept of life. This, I know, will not be granted by the man to whom you go; therefore, speak and act in his presence, as if I were already beyond the skies."

Had this faithful friend, now his almost adoring wife, left his side with more sanguine hopes, how grievously would they have been blasted!

After an absence of two hours, she returned to the dungeon of her Wallace; and as her trembling form was clasped in

his arms, she exclaimed in a passion of tears—" Here will I live! Here will I die! They may sever my soul from my body, but never again part me from this dear bosom!"

"Never, never, my Helen!" said he, reading her conference with the King, in the wild terror of its effects. Her senses seemed fearfully disordered. As she clung to him, and muttered sentences of an incoherency that shook him to the soul, he cast a look of such expressive inquiry upon Gloucester, that the earl could only answer by hastily putting his hand on his face, to hide his own emotion. At last, the tears she shed appeared to relieve the excess of her agonies, and she gradually sunk into an awful calm. Then rising from her husband's arms, she seated herself on this stony couch, and said in a firm voice, "Earl, I can now bear to hear you repeat the last decision of the King of England."

Gloucester, who, though not absolutely

present at the interview between his sovereign and Helen, had heard all that passed, from the anti-room where he remained in attendance, briefly confessed to Wallace, that he had too truly appreciated the pretended conciliation of the King. Edward's proposals to Helen, were as artfully couched, as deceptive in their design. Their issue was, to make Wallace his slave, or to hold him his victim. In his conference with her, he addressed the vanity of an ambitious woman; and all the affections of a devoted heart: he enforced his arguments, with persuasions to allure, and threats to compel obedience. In the last, he called up images to appal the soul of Helen; but stedfast in the principles of her lord, while ready to sink under the menaced horrors of his fate, she summoned all her strength to give utterance to her last reply.

"Mortal distinctions, King of England!" cried she, "cannot bribe the wife of Sir William Wallace to betray his vir-

tues. His life is dear to me; but his immaculate faith to his God and his lawful prince, are dearer. I can see him die, and smile;—for I shall join him triumphant in heaven:—but to behold him dishonour himself! to counsel him so to do, is beyond my power—I should expire with grief, in the shameful moment."

The indignation of the King, at this answer, was too oppressive of the tender nature of Lady Helen, for Gloucester to venture repeating to her husband; and while she turned deadly pale at the recollection, Wallace, exulting in her conduct, pressed her hand silently, but fervently to his lips.

The earl resumed; but, observing the re-awakened agonies of her mind, in her too expressive countenance; he strove, to soften, as much as possible, the blow he must inflict in the remainder of his narrative.

"Dearest lady," said he, rather addressing her, than Wallace; "to convince

your suffering spirit, that no earthly means have been left unessayed to change the unjust purpose of the King, know, that when he quitted you, I left, in his presence, the queen and my wife both weeping tears of disappointment. On the moment when I found that arguments could no longer avail, I implored him, by every consideration of God and man, to redeem his honour, sacrificed by the unjust decree pronounced on Sir William Wallace. My entreaties were repulsed with anger; for the sudden entrance of Lord Athol with fresh fuel to his flame, so confirmed his direful resolution, that, desperate for my friend, I threw myself on my knees. The queen, and then my wife, both prostrate at his feet, enforced my suit, but all in vain: his heart seemed hardened by our earnestness; and his answer, while it put us to silence, granted Wallace a triumph even in his chains:—"Cease!" cried he, "Wallace and I have now come to that issue that one must fall. I shall

use my advantage, though I should walk over the necks of half my kindred to accomplish his fate. I can find no security on my throne, no peace in my bed, until I know that he, my direst enemy, is no more!"

"Sorry am I, generous Gloucester," interrupted Wallace, "that for my life, you have stooped your knee to one so unworthy of your nobleness. Let, then, his tyranny take its course. But its shaft shall not reach the soul, his unkingly spirit hopes to wound. He may dishonour my body, may mangle these limbs, but William Wallace will then be far beyond his reach!" Gloucester gazed on him, doubting the inspired expression of his countenance. "Surely," said he, "my unconquered friend will not now be forced to self-violence?"—"No," returned Wallace, "suspect me not of such base vassalage to this poor tabernacle of clay.—Did I believe it my Father's will, that I should die at every pore, I would submit;

for so his immaculate Son laid down his life for a rebellious world!—And is a servant greater than his master, that I should be exempt from this trial?—But I await his summons, and he whispers to my soul, that the rope of Edward shall never make this free-born neck feel its degrading touch."

Helen, with re-awakened horror, listened to the words of Wallace, which referred to the last outrage to be committed on his sacred remains. She recalled the corresponding threats of the King, and again losing self-possession, starting wildly up, exclaimed, "And is there no humanity in his ruthless heart!—Am I to be deprived of ——O!" cried she, tearing her eyes from the beloved form on which it was such bliss to gaze, "let the sacrifice of my life be offered to this cruel man, to save from indignity ——" She could add no more, but dropt half fainting on the arm of Wallace.

Gloucester understood the object of

such anguished solicitude, and while Wallace again seated her, he revived her by the assurance, that the clause she so fearfully deprecated, had been repealed by Edward. But the good earl blushed as he spoke, for in this instance he said what was not the truth. Far different had been the issue of all his attempts at mitigation. The arrival of Athol from Scotland, with advices from the Countess of Strathearn, that Lady Helen Mar had fled southward to raise an insurrection in favour of Wallace; and that Lord Bothwell had gone to France, to move Philip, to embrace the same cause; gave Edward so good an excuse for giving way to his, hitherto hardly suppressed, hatred against Wallace, that he pronounced an order for the immediate and full execution of that sentence, he was determined, from the first, should not be abrogated.—Artifice, to mislead the French embassadors with an idea that he was desirous to accord with their royal master's wish, had been the

sole foundation of his proposals to the Scottish chief.—And his interview with Lady Helen, though so intemperately conducted, was dictated by the same subtle policy.

When, after the representations of Lord Athol, Gloucester found the impossibility of obtaining any further respite of the murderous decree, he attempted to prevail for the remission of the last clause, which ordered, that his friend's noble body should be dismembered, and his limbs sent as terrors to rebellion, to the four capital fortresses of Scotland. Edward spurned at this petition, with even more acrimony than he had done the prayer for his victim's life; and Gloucester then starting from his knee, in a burst of honest indignation, exclaimed, "Oh! King, remember what is done by thee this day. Refusing to give righteous judgment in favour of one, who prefers virtue to a crown and life!—As insincere, as secret, have been your last conditions with him;

but they will be revealed, when the great Judge, that searcheth all men's hearts, shall cause thee to answer for this matter at the dreadful day of universal doom. Thou hast now given sentence on a patriot and a prince; and then shall judgment be given on thee!"

"Dangerous, indeed, is his rebellious spirit," cried Edward, in almost speechless wrath, "since it affects even the duty of my own house! Gloucester, leave my presence; and on pain of your own death, dare not to approach me, till I send for you to see this rebel's head on London bridge!"

To disappoint the revengeful monarch, of, at least, this object of malice, Gloucester was now resolved; and imparting his wishes to the warden of the Tower, his trusty friend, he laid a plan accordingly.

Helen believed his declaration to her; and bowed her head, in sign that she was satisfied with his zeal. The earl, address-

ing Wallace, continued, "Could I have purchased thy life, thou preserver of mine! with the forfeiture of all I possess, I should have rejoiced in the exchange. But as that may not be, is there aught in the world which I can do to administer to thy wishes?"

"Generous Gloucester!" exclaimed Wallace, "how unwearied has been your friendship! But I shall not tax it much farther. I was writing my last wishes, when this angel entered my apartment: she will now be the voice of William Wallace to his friends. But still I must make you one request, and one which I trust will not be out of your power. Let this heart, ever faithful to Scotland, be at least buried in its native country.—When I cease to breathe, give it to Helen, and she will mingle it with the sacred dust of those I love. For herself, dear Gloucester! ah! guard the vestal purity and life of my best beloved, for there are

those, who, when I am gone, may threaten both."

Gloucester, who knew that in this apprehension, Wallace meant the lords Soulis and De Valence, pledged himself for the performance of his first request; and for the second, he assured him that he would protect Helen as a sister. But she, regardless of all other evils than that of being severed from her dearest and best friend, exclaimed in bitter sorrow, "Wherever I am, still, and for ever, shall all of Wallace that remains on earth be with me. He gave himself to me, and no mortal power shall ever divide us?"

Gloucester could not reply before the voice of the warden, calling to him that the hour of shutting the gates was arrived, compelled him to bid his friend farewel. He grasped the hand of Wallace with a strong emotion; for he knew, that the next time he should meet him, would be on the scaffold. During the moments of

this parting, Helen, with her hands clasped on her knees, and her eyes bent downwards, inwardly and earnestly invoked the Almighty to endow her with fortitude to bear the horrors she was to witness, that she might not, by her agonies, add to the tortures of Wallace.

The cheering voice, that was ever music to her ears, recalled her from this devout abstraction. He laid his hand on hers, and gazing on her with tender pity, held such sweet discourse with her, on the approaching end of all his troubles, of his everlasting beatitude, that she listened and wept, and even smiled. "Yes," added he, "a little while, and my virgin bride shall give me her dear embrace in heaven; angels will participate our joy; and my Marion's generous soul, join the blest communion!—She died to preserve my life:—you suffered a living death to maintain my honour! Can I then divide you, noblest of created beings, in my soul! Take then, my heart's dear Helen,

thy Wallace's last earthly kiss!" She bent towards him and fixed her lips to his. It was the first time they had met; his parting words still hung on them, and an icy cold ran through all her veins. "I have not many hours to be with thee, and yet a strange drowsiness overpowers my senses; but I shall speak to thee again!" He looked up as he spoke, with such a glance of holy love, that not doubting he was now bidding her indeed his last farewel; that he was to pass from this sleep out of the power of man; she pressed his hand without a word; and as he dropt his head upon her lap, with an awed spirit she saw him sink to profound repose.

CHAP. XVII.

LONG and silently had she watched his rest. So gentle was his breath, that he scarcely seemed to breathe; and often, during her sad vigils, did she stoop her cheek to feel the respiration, which bore witness that his outraged spirit was yet fettered to earth. She tremblingly placed her hand on his heart; but still its warm beats spake comfort to hers. The soul of Wallace, as well as his beloved body, was yet clasped in her arms. "The arms of a sister enfold thee;" murmured she to herself; "they would gladly bear thee up, to lay thee on the bosom of thy martyred wife; and there, how would'st thou smile upon and bless me!"

The first rays of the dawn shone upon his peaceful face, just as the door opened,

and a priest appeared. He held in his hands the sacred host, and the golden dove for performing the rites of the dying. At this sight, the harbinger of a fearful doom, the fortitude of Helen forsook her; and throwing her arms frantickly over the sleeping Wallace, she exclaimed, "He is dead! his sacrament is now with the Lord of Mercy!"—Her voice awakened Wallace; he started from his position: and Helen, (seeing that he; whose gliding to death in his sleep, she had so lately deprecated; now indeed lived to mount the scaffold;) in unutterable horror, fell back with a heavy groan.

Wallace, having accosted the priest with a reverential welcome, turned to Helen, and tenderly whispered her, "Let not the completion of my fate, dearest half of myself! shake your dependance on the only True and Just. Rejoice that Wallace has been deemed worthy to die for his virtues. And what is death, my Helen, that we should shun it, even to

rebelling against the Lord of Life?—Is it not the door, which opens to us immortality? and in that blest moment, who will regret that he passed through it in the bloom of his years?—Come then, sister of my soul, and share with thy Wallace the last supper of his Lord; the pledge of the happy eternity, to which, by his grace, I now ascend!"

Helen, conscience-struck, and re-awakened to holy confidence by the heavenly composure of his manner, obeyed the impulse of his hand; and they both knelt before the minister of peace. As the sacred rite proceeded, it seemed the indissoluble union of Helen's spirit with that of Wallace:—"My life will expire with his!" was her secret response to the venerable man's exhortation to the passing soul; and when he sealed Wallace with the holy cross, under the last unction; as one who believed herself standing on the brink of eternity, she longed to share also that mark of death. At that moment,

the dismal toll of a bell sounded from the top of the Tower. The heart of Helen paused. The warden and his train entered. "I will follow him," cried she, starting from her knees; "into the grave itself!"

What was said, what was done, she knew not, till she found herself on the scaffold, upheld by the arm of Gloucester. Wallace stood before her, with his hands bound across, and his noble head uncovered. His eyes were turned upwards with a martyr's confidence in the power he served. A silence, as of some desert waste, reigned throughout the thousands who stood below. The executioner approached to throw the rope over the neck of his victim. At this sight, Helen, with a cry that was re-echoed by the compassionate spectators, rushed to his bosom. Wallace, with a mighty strength, burst the bands asunder which confined his arms, and clasping her to him with a force that seemed to make her touch his

very heart; his breast heaved, as if his soul were breaking from its outraged tenement; and while his head sunk on her neck, he exclaimed in a low and interrupted voice—"My prayer is heard!—Helen, we shall next meet, to part no more. May God preserve my country, and—" He stopped—He fell:—and with the mighty shock, the scaffold shook to its foundations.

The executioner, aghast, approached the prostrate chief.—Helen was still locked close in his arms. The man stooped to raise his victim, who he supposed had only sunk under the agonies of his mind; but the attempt was beyond his strength. In vain he called on him and Helen to separate, and cease from delaying the execution of the law; no voice replied, no motion answered his loud remonstrance.—Gloucester, with an agitation, which hardly allowed him power to speak or move, remembered the words of Wallace, "that the rope of Edward should

never sully his animate body;"—and bending to his friend, he spoke; but all was silent there.—He raised the chieftain's head, and looking on his face, found indeed the indisputable stamp of death. "There," cried he, in a burst of grief, letting it fall again upon the insensible bosom of Helen; "there broke the noblest heart that ever beat in the breast of man!"

The priests, the executioners, crowded round him at this declaration. But giving a command, in a low tone, to the warden, he took the motionless Helen in his arms, and carried her from the scaffold back into the Tower.

CHAP. XVIII.

ON the evening of the fatal day in which the sun of William Wallace set for ever on his country, the Earl of Gloucester was imparting to the warden of the Tower, his last directions, respecting the sacred remains, when the door of the chamber was suddenly burst open by a file of soldiers. A man in armour, with his visor closed, was in the midst of them. The captain of the band, told the warden, that the stranger, before him, had behaved in a most seditious manner. He had demanded admittance into the Tower; and on the sentinel, to whom he spoke, making answer that, in consequence of the execution of Sir William Wallace, orders

had been given "that no strangers should enter the gates, until the following morning," he asked some questions relative to the condemnation of the Scottish chief; and finding that the sentence of the law had been executed to the uttermost, he burst into a passionate emotion; uttering such threats against the King of England, that the captain thought it his duty to have him seized, and brought before the warden.

On the entrance of the soldiers, Gloucester had retired from observation into the shadow of the room. He turned anxiously round, on hearing these particulars. The stranger, who stood in the midst, when the captain ceased speaking, fearlessly threw up his visor, and exclaimed, "Take me, not to your warden alone, but to your King; let me pierce his conscience, with his infamy—ay, and stab him, ere I die!"

In this frantic adjuration, Gloucester discovered the gallant Bruce. And has-

tening towards him, to prevent his, apparently determined, exposure of himself; with a few words, he dismissed the officer and his guard; and then turning to the warden, " Sir Edward," said he, " this stranger is not less my friend, than he was that of Sir William Wallace!" " Then far be it from me, earl, to denounce him to our enraged monarch. I have seen enough of noble blood shed, already: and though we, the subjects of King Edward, cannot call your late friend a martyr, yet we must think his country honoured in so steady a patriot; and may surely wish, we had many the like in our own!"(t) The worthy old knight, judging that Gloucester would desire to be left alone with the stranger, with these words bowed and withdrew.

Bruce, who had hardly heard the observation of the warden, on his departure turned upon the earl, and with a bursting heart, exclaimed, " Tell me, is it true? Am I so lost a wretch, as to be deprived

of my best, my dearest friend? Answer me to the fact, that I may speedily take my course!" Gloucester, alarmed at the direful expression of his countenance; with a quivering lip, but in silence, laid his hand upon his arm. Bruce too well understood what he durst not speak; and shaking it off frantickly, "I have no friend!" cried he; "Wallace! my brave and only Wallace, thou art rifled from me! And shall I have fellowship with these?—No; all mankind are my enemies; and soon will I leave their detested sojourn!" Gloucester attempted to interrupt him; but he broke out afresh, and with redoubled violence:—"And you, earl," cried he, "lived in this realm, and suffered such a sacrilege on God's most perfect work? Ungrateful, worthless man! fill up the measure of your baseness: deliver me to Edward; and let me brave him to his face. Oh! let me die, covered with the blood of thy enemies, my murdered Wallace! my more than

brother! that shall be the royal robe, thy Bruce will bring to thee!"

Gloucester stood in dignified forbearance under the invectives, and stormy grief of the Scottish prince; and when exhausted nature seemed to take rest in momentary silence, he approached him. Bruce cast on him a lurid glance of suspicion. "Leave me;" cried he; "I hate the whole world; and you the worst in it, for you might have saved him and you did not; you might have preserved his sacred limbs from being made the gazing stock of traitors, and you did not:—away from me, apt son of a tyrant! lest I tear you piece-meal!"——"By the heroic spirit of him whom, this outrage on me, dishonours, hear my answer, Bruce! And if not on this spot, let me then exculpate myself by the side of his body, yet uninvaded by a sacrilegious touch.—"How?" interrupted Bruce, with less harshness, and looking doubtingly. Gloucester continued; "All that was mortal

in our friend, now lies in a distant chamber of this quadrangle. When I could not prevail on Edward, either by entreaty or reproaches, to remit the last gloomy vengeance of tyrants, I determined to wrest its object from his hands. A notorious murderer died yesterday under the torture. By the assistance of the warden, after the inanimate corse of our friend was brought into this house to be conveyed to the scene of its last horrors, the malefactor's body was placed on the sledge in its stead; and on that murderer, most justly fell the rigour of so dreadful a sentence."

The whole aspect of Bruce changed during this explanation; which was followed, by a brief account of their friend's heroic sufferings, and death. "Can you pardon my reproaches to you?" cried he, stretching out his hand; "Forgive, generous Gloucester, the distraction of a severely wounded spirit?" This pardon was immediately accorded; and Bruce impe-

tuously added, "Lead me to these dear remains, that, with redoubled certainty, I may strike this steel deep into his murderer's heart! I came to succour him; I now stay to die,—but not unrevenged!"

"I will lead you," returned the earl, "where you shall learn a different lesson. His soul will speak to you, by the lips of his bride, now watching by his sacred relics. Feeble is now her lamp of life; but a saint's vigilance keeps it burning, till it may expire in the grave with him she so chastely loved." A few words gave Bruce to understand that he meant Lady Helen Mar; and with a deepened grief, when he heard in what an awful hour their hands were plighted, he followed his conductor through the quadrangle.

When Gloucester gently opened the door, which contained the remains of the bravest and the best, Bruce stood for a moment on the threshold. At the further end of the apartment, lit by a solitary taper, lay the body of Wallace on a bier,

covered with a soldier's cloak. Kneeling by its side, with her head on its bosom, was Helen. Her hair hung disordered over her shoulders, and shrouded, with its dark locks, the marble features of her beloved. Bruce scarcely breathed. He attempted to advance, but he staggered, and fell. She looked up at the noise; but her momentary alarm ceased when she saw Gloucester. He spoke in a tender voice; "Be not agitated, lady; but here is the Earl of Carrick."

"Nothing can agitate me more," replied she, turning mournfully towards the prince, who, raised from the floor by Gloucester, beheld her regarding him with the look of one already an inhabitant of the grave.—"Helen!" faintly articulated Bruce, approaching her; "I come to share your sorrows and to avenge them." "Avenge them!" repeated she, after a pause: "Is there aught in vengeance, that can awaken life in these cold veins again? Let the murderers live in the

world they have made a desert, by the destruction of its brightest glory;—and then, our home will be his tomb!" Again she bent her head upon his breast, and seemed to forget that she had been spoken to; that Bruce was present.

"May I not look on him?" cried he, grasping her hand; "O! Helen, shew me that heroic face, from whose beams my heart first caught the fire of virtue!" She moved, and the clay-cold features of all that was ever perfect in manly beauty, met his sight. But the bright eyes were shut: the radiance of his smile, was dimmed in death; yet still that smile was there. Bruce precipitated his lips to his: and sinking on his knees, remained in a silence, only broken by his sighs.

It was an awful, and a heart-breaking pause; for the voice which, in all scenes of weal or woe, had ever mingled sweetly with theirs, was silent. Helen, who had not wept since the tremendous hour of the morning, now burst into an agony of

tears; and the vehemence of her feelings, tearing so delicate a frame, now rendered weak unto death, by a consuming sickness, which her late exertions and present griefs, had made seize on her vitals, seemed to threaten the immediate extinction of her being. Bruce, aroused by her smothered cries, as she lay, almost expiring, upheld by Gloucester, hurried to her side. By degrees she recovered to life and observance; but finding herself removed from the bier, she sprung wildly towards it. Bruce caught her arm, to support her tottering steps. She looked stedfastly at him, and then at the motionless body. "He is there!" cried she, "and yet he speaks not!—He sooths not my grief—I weep, and he does not comfort me!—And there he lies! O! Bruce, can this be possible? Do I really see him dead?—And what is death?" added she, grasping the cold hand of Wallace to her heart: "Didst thou not tell me, when this hand pressed mine, and bless-

ed me, that it was only a translation from grief to joy!—And is it not so, Bruce? Behold how we mourn, and he is happy!—I will obey thee, my immortal Wallace!" cried she, casting her arms about him; "I will obey thee, and weep no more!"

She was silent and calm. And Bruce, kneeling on the opposite side of his friend. listened, without interruption, to the arguments which Gloucester adduced, to persuade him to abstain, altogether, from discovering himself to Edward, or uttering resentment against him, till he could do both as became the man for whom Wallace had sacrificed so much, even till he was King of Scotland. "To that end," said Gloucester, "did this gallant chieftain live. For, in restoring you to the people of Scotland, he believed he was setting a seal to their liberties and their peace. To that end did he die, and in the direful moment, uttered prayers for your establishment. Think then of this;

and let him not look down from his heavenly dwelling, and see, that Bruce despises the country for which he bled; that the now only hope of Scotland is sacrificed, in a moment of inconsiderate revenge, to the cruel hand which broke his dauntless heart!"

Bruce did not oppose this counsel; and in proportion as the fumes of passion passed away, and left a manly sorrow, and determination of revenge in his soul, he listened with approbation; and finally resolved, whatever violence he might do his nature, not to allow Edward the last triumph of finding him in his power.

The earl's next essay was with Helen. He feared that a rumour of the stranger's indignation at the late execution, and that the Earl of Gloucester had taken him in charge, might, when associated with the fact that the widow of Sir William Wallace also remained under his protection, awaken some suspicion; and direct investigations, too likely to discover the im-

position he had put on the executioners of the last clause in his royal father's most iniquitous sentence. He, therefore, explained his new alarm to Helen; and conjured her, if she would yet preserve the hallowed remains before her, from any chance of violence, (which her lingering near them might induce, by attracting notice to her movements;) she must consent, almost immediately, to leave the kingdom. The valiant, and ever faithful heart of Wallace, should be her companion; and an English captain, who had partaken of his clemency at Berwick, her trusty conductor to her native land. To meet every objection, before she returned any answer, he added, "Bruce shall be protected by me with strict fidelity till some safe opportunity may offer for his bearing to Scotland the sacred corpse, that must ever be considered the most precious relic in his country."

"As Heaven wills the trial of my

heart," returned she, "so let it be!" and bending her aching head on the dear pillow of her rest, the bosom which, cold and deserted as it was by its heavenly habitant, was still the bosom of her Wallace; the temple, rendered sacred by the footsteps of a god!—for, had not virtue and Wallace dwelt there? and where virtue is, there abides the spirit of the Holy One!—She passed the remainder of the night in vigils;—which were not less devoutly maintained by the chastened heart of the Prince of Scotland.

CHAP. XIX.

THE tidings of the dreadful vengeance which Edward had taken against the Scottish nation, by pouring all his wrath

upon the head of Wallace, struck like the lightning of heaven through the souls of men. None, of either country, but those in the confidence of Gloucester, knew that Heaven had snatched him from the dishonour of so vile a death. The English turned, blushing, from each other; and ventured not to breathe the name of a man, whose virtues seemed to have found a sanctuary for his fame, in every honest heart. But when the news reached Scotland, the indignation was general. All envyings, all strife were forgotten, in unqualified resentment of the deed. There was not a man, even amongst the late refractory chieftains, excepting the Cummins, and their coadjutors Soulis and and Monteith, who had believed, that Edward seriously meant to sentence the Scottish patriot, to a severer fate than that which he had pronounced against his rebellious vassal, the exiled Baliol. The exe cution of Wallace, whose only offence was known to be that of having served his coun-

try too faithfully, was therefore so unexpected, that the first promulgation of it excited such an abhorrence of the perpetrator in every breast, that the whole country rose as one man, and threatened to march instantly to London and sacrifice the tyrant on his throne.

At this crisis, when the mountains of the north seemed heaving from their base to overwhelm the blood-stained fields of England, every heart, which secretly rejoiced in the late sanguinary event, quailed within its possessor, as it tremblingly anticipated that the consequences of the fall of Wallace, would prove the ruin of his enemies.—At this instant, when the furies armed every clan in Scotland, Kirkpatrick, at the head of a band of Wallace's old soldiers, breathing forth revenge like a consuming fire before them, led the way to the general destruction of Edward's newly established power in the lowlands. John Cummin, the Regent, stood aghast. He foresaw

his own downfal in this re-awakened enthusiasm respecting the man whom, his treachery, or pusillanimity, (all guessed,) had been the first means of betraying to his enemies. Baffled in the aim of his ambition, by the very means he had taken to effect it, he saw no alternative but to throw himself at once upon the bounty of England; and to this purpose he bethought him of the only chance of preserving the power of Edward, and consequently his own, in Scotland. Knowing, by past events, that this tempest of the soul, excited by remorse in some, and gratitude in others, could only be maintained, to any conclusive injury to England, by a royal hand; and that that hand was expected to be Bruce's; he determined at once, that the prince, to whom he had sworn fealty, and to whom he owed his present elevation, should follow the fate of his friend. By the spies, which he constantly kept round Hunting tower, he was apprized, that Bruce had

set off towards London in a vessel from Dundee.—On these grounds, he sent a dispatch to King Edward, informing him, that destiny had established him supreme lord of Scotland; for now, its second, and its last hope, had put himself, as it were, into his hands. With this intelligence, he gave a particular account of all Bruce's proceedings, from the time of his meeting Wallace in France, to his present following that chief to London. He then craved his Majesty's pardon, for having been betrayed into an union with such conspirators; and repeated his hope, that the restitution he made, in thus shewing the royal hand where to find its last opponent, would give full conviction of his penitence and duty. He closed his letter by urging the King, to take instant, and effectual measures, to disable Bruce from disturbing the quiet of Scotland, or ever again disputing his regal claims.

Gloucester was in the presence, when this epistle was delivered in, and read by

his Majesty. On the suit of his daughter, Edward had been reconciled to his son-in-law; but when he shewed to him the contents of Cummin's letter, with a suspicious smile he said in a low voice, "In case you should know this new rebel's lurking place, presume not to leave this room till he is brought before me. See to your obedience, Ralph, or your head shall follow Wallace's."

The King instantly withdrew: and the earl, aware that search would most probably be made through all his houses, sought in his own mind for some expedient to apprize Bruce of his danger.—To write, in the presence-chamber, was impossible: to deliver a message in a whisper, would be hazardous; for most of the surrounding courtiers, seeing the frown with which the King had left the apartment, marked the commands he gave the marshal: "Be sure that the Earl of Gloucester, quits not this room till I return."

The earl, in the confusion of his thoughts, turned his eye on Lord Montgomery, who had only arrived that very morning from an embassy to Spain. He had heard, with unutterable horror, the fate of Wallace; and extending his interest in him, to those whom he loved, had arranged with Gloucester, to accompany him that very evening to pledge his friendship to Bruce. To Montgomery, then, as to the only man acquainted with his secret, he turned; and taking his spurs off his feet, and pulling out a purse of gold, he said aloud, and with as easy an air as he could assume, "Here, my Lord Montgomery; as you are going directly to Highgate, I will thank you to call at my lodge;—put these spurs, and this purse, into the hands of the groom we spoke of; he will know what use to make of them." He then turned negligently on his heel, and Montgomery quitted the apartment.

The apprehension of this young lord,

was not less quick than the invention of his friend. He guessed that the Scottish prince was betrayed; and to render his escape the less likely to be traced, (the ground being wet, and liable to retain impression) before he went to the lodge, he dismounted in the adjoining wood, and, with his own hands, reversed the iron on the feet of the animal he had provided for Bruce. He then proceeded to the house, and found the object of his mission disguised as a carmelite, and in the chapel, paying his vesper adorations to the Almighty Being on whom his whole dependance hung. Uninfluenced by the robes he wore; his was the devotion of the soul: and not unaptly, at such an hour, came one to deliver him from a danger which, unknown to himself, was then within a few minutes of seizing its prey.

Montgomery entered; and being instantly recognised by Bruce, the inge-

nuous prince, never doubting a noble heart, stretched out his hand to him.—"I take it," returned the earl, "only to give it a parting grasp. Behold these spurs, and purse, sent to you by Gloucester!—You know their use. Without further observation follow me." Montgomery was thus abrupt, because, as he left the palace, he had heard the marshals give orders for different military detachments to search every residence of Gloucester, for the Earl of Carrick; and he did not doubt, that the party, dispatched to Highgate, were now mounting the summit of the hill.

Bruce, throwing off his cassoc and cowl, again appeared in complete armour; and after bending his knee, for a moment, on the stone which covered the remains of Wallace, he followed his friend from the chapel, through a solitary path in the park, to the centre of the wood. Montgomery pointed to the horse. Bruce

grasped the hand of his faithful conductor; "I go, Montgomery," said he, "to my kingdom. But its crown shall never clasp my brows, till the remains of Wallace return to their country. And, whether peace, or the sword, restore them to Scotland, still shall a king's, a brother's friendship unite my heart to Gloucester and to you." As he spoke, he vaulted into his saddle; and receiving the cordial blessings of Montgomery, touched his good steed with his pointed rowels, and was out of sight in an instant.(u)

CHAP. XX.

ABOUT the hour of twilight, on the eighth day after Bruce had cast his last

look on the capital of England;—that scene of his long captivity under the spell of delusion, that theatre of his family's disgrace, and of his own eternal regrets!—he crossed the little stream which marked, the oft-contended, barrier land of the two kingdoms. He there checked the headlong speed of his horse; and having alighted, to give it breath, walked by its side, musing on the different feelings with which he now entered Scotland, from the buoyant emotions with which he had sprung on its shore in the beginning of the year. These thoughts as full of sorrow as of hope, had not occupied him long, when he espied a man in the Red Cummin's colours, galloping towards him. He guessed him to be some new messenger of the Regent to Edward, and throwing himself before the horse, caught it by the bridle, and commanded its rider to deliver to him the dispatches which, he knew, he carried to the King of England. The man, as was expected,

refused; and striking his spurs into his beast, tried to trample down his assailant. But Bruce was not, so, to be put from his aim. The manner of the Scot convinced him that his suspicions were right, and putting forth his nervous arm, with one action he pulled him from his saddle, and laid him prostrate on the ground. Again he demanded the papers: "I am your prince," cried Bruce, "and by the allegiance you owe to Robert Bruce, I command you to deliver them into my hands. Life shall be your reward. Immediate death the punishment of your obstinacy."

In such an extremity, the man did not hesitate: and taking from his bosom a sealed packet, immediately resigned it.—Bruce, ordered him to stand before him till he had read the contents. The poor fellow, trembling with terror of this formidable freebooter, (for he placed no belief in the declaration that he was the Prince of Scotland) obeyed; and Bruce,

breaking the seals, found, as he expected, a long epistle from the Regent, urging the sanguinary aim of his communications. He reiterated his arguments for the expediency of speedily putting Robert Bruce to death; he represented "the danger that there was in delay; lest a man, so royally descended, and so popular as he had become, (since it was now publicly understood, that he had already fought his country's battles under the name of Sir Thomas de Longueville) should find means of placing himself at the head of so many zealots in his favour. These circumstances, so propitious to ambition; and his now adding personal revenge, to his former boldness and policy, would, at this juncture, (should he arrive in Scotland,) turn the growing commotions, to the most decisive uses against the English power." The Regent concluded, with saying, that "the lords Loch-awe, Douglas, and Ruthven, were come down from the Highlands, with a multitudinous army, to

drive out the Southron garrisons, and to re-possess themselves of the fortresses of Stirling and Edinburgh. That Lord Bothwell had returned from France, with the real Sir Thomas de Longueville, a knight of great valiancy. And that Sir Roger Kirkpatrick, after having massacred half the English Castellans in the border counties, was now lying at Torthorald, ready to commence his murderous reprisals through the coasts of Galloway. For himself, Cummin told the King, he had secretly removed to the Franciscan monastery at Dumfries; where he should, most anxiously await his majesty's pardon and commands."

Bruce closed the packet. To prevent his designs being blown, before they were ready to open, he laid his sword upon the shoulder of the man: "You are my prisoner;" said he; "but fear not. I only mean to hold you in safety, till your master has answered for his treason."—The messenger thought that, whoever this

imperious stranger was, he saw a truth in his eyes which ratified this assurance; and, without opposition, he walked before him till they stopped at Torthorald.

Night had closed in, when Bruce sounded his bugle under the walls. Kirkpatrick, himself, answered from the embrasure over the barbacan-gate, and demanded who desired admittance. "None," cried he, "that is not a true Scot, need venture his neck within these towers!" "'Tis the avenger of Sir William Wallace," was the reply. The gates flew open at the words; and Kirkpatrick, standing in the arch-way amid a blaze of torches, received his guest with a brave welcome.

Bruce spoke no more, till he entered the banquetting-hall. Three other knights were seated by the table. He turned to Kirkpatrick, "My valiant friend," said he, "order your servants to take charge of that Scot;" pointing to the messenger of Cummin; "and till I command his

release, let him be treated with the lenity, which shall ever belong to a prisoner of Robert Bruce!" As he spoke, he threw up his visor; and Kirkpatrick, who, with others, had heard that the De Longueville who had been the companion of Wallace, was their rightful prince, now recognised the well-known features of the brave foreigner in the stranger before him. Not doubting the verity of his words, he bent his knee with the homage due to his king; and in the action was immediately followed by Sir Eustace Maxwell, Sir James Lindsay, and Adam Fleming, who were the other knights present.

"I come," cried the prince, "in the spirit of my heart's sovereign and friend, the now immortal Wallace, to live or to die with you in the defence of my country's liberties. With such assistance as yours, his invincible coadjutors, and with the blessing of Heaven on our arms, I hope to redeem Scotland from the dis-

grace, which her late horrible submission to the tyrant, has fastened on her name. The transgressions of my house, have been grievous: but this last deadly sin of my people, calls for expiation dire indeed!—And it comes in the moment of guilt! in their crime they receive punishment. They broke from their side, the arm which, alone, had rescued them from their enemies!—I now come to save them from themselves. Their having permitted the sacrifice of the rights of my family, was the first injury committed on the constitution; and it prepared a path for the ensuing tyranny, which seized upon the kingdom. But, by resuming these rights, which is now my firm purpose, I open to you a way to recover our hereditary independence. The direful scene, just acted on the Tower-hill of London, that horrible climax of Scottish treason! must convince every reasonable mind, that all the late misfortunes of our country have proceeded from the base

jealousies of its nobles. There, then, let them die; and may the grave of Wallace, be the tomb of dissension! Seeing where their own true interests point, surely the brave chieftains of this land will rally round their lawful prince, who here declares, he knows no medium between death and victory!"

The spirit with which this address was pronounced, the magnanimity it conveyed, assisted by the graces of his youth and noble deportment, struck the hearts of his auditors, and aroused, in double vigour, the principles of resentment to which the first tidings of their heroic countryman's fate had given birth. Kirkpatrick needed no other stimulus, than his almost idolatrous memory of Wallace; and he listened, with an answering ardour, to Bruce's exhortation. The prince, next disclosed, to his now zealously pledged friends, the particulars of the Red Cummin's treachery. "He now lies at Dumfries!" cried Kirkpatrick,

"thither then let us go, and confront him with his treason. When falsehood is to be confounded, it is best to grapple with the sorceress in the moment of detection: should we hesitate, she may elude our grasp."

Dumfries was only a few miles distant, and they might reach its convent before the first matins. Fatigue was not felt by Bruce, when in pursuit of a great object; and after a slight refreshment, he, and his four determined friends, took horse.

As they had anticipated, the midnight bell was ringing for prayers as the troop stopped at the Franciscan gate. Lindsay, having been in the Holy Land during the late public struggles, and not likely to be suspected of any hostility against the inhabitants of the monastery, (the principal of which was a Cummin,) aledged business with the abbot, and desired to see him. On the father's bidding the party welcome, Bruce stepped forward and addressed him, "Reverend sir,

I come from London. I have an affair to settle with Lord Badenoch: and I know, by his letters to King Edward, that he is secretly lodged in this convent; I therefore demand to be conducted to him." This peremptory requisition, and the superior air of the person who made it, did not leave the abbot room to doubt that he was some illustrious messenger from the King of England; and, with hardly a demur, he left the other knights in the cloisters of the church, and led the noble Southron (as he thought) to his kinsman.

The treacherous Regent had just quitted the refectory, and retired to his own apartment, as the abbot conducted the stranger into his presence. Badenoch started, frowningly, from his seat, at such unusual intrusion. Bruce's visor was closed: and the ecclesiastic, perceiving the Regent's displeasure, dispersed it, by announcing the visitant as a messenger from King Edward. "Then leave us

alone," returned he; unwilling that even this, his convenient kinsman, should know the extent of his treason against his country. The abbot had hardly closed the door, when Bruce, whose indignant soul burnt to utter his full contempt of the wretch before him, hastily advanced to speak; but the cautious Badenoch, fearful that the father might yet be within hearing, put his finger to his lips. Bruce paused, and listened gloomily, to the departing steps of the abbot. When they were no more heard, with one hand raising his visor, and the other grasping the scroll of detection—" Thus, basest of the base race of Cummin!" exclaimed he, " may you, for a moment, elude the universal shame which awaits your crimes."

At sight of the face, on hearing the words of Bruce, the unmanly coward uttered a cry of terror, and rushed towards the door. " You pass not here," continued the prince, " till I have laid open

all your guilt; and pronounced, on you, the doom, due to a treacherous friend, and traitorous subject." "Infatuated Bruce," exclaimed Badenoch, assuming an air of insulted friendship, now that he found escape impossible; "what false tongue has persuaded you, thus to arraign one, who has ever been, but too faithfully, the adherent of your desperate fortunes?—I have laboured in secret day and night, in your service, and thus am I repaid.

Bruce smiled disdainfully at this poor attempt to deceive him; and, as he stood with his back against the door, he opened the murderous packet, and read from it all its contents. Cummin turned pale and red at each sentence.—And at last, Bruce closing it, "Now, then, *faithful adherent* of Robert Bruce!" cried he, "say, what the man deserves, who, in these blood-red lines, petitions the death of his lawful prince?—Oh! thou arch-regicide! Doth not my very look kill thee?"

Badenoch, with his complexion of a livid hue, and his voice faltering, attempted to deny the letter having been his hand-writing, or that he had any concern in the former embassy to Edward:—then, finding that these falsehoods only irritated Bruce to higher indignation, and fearful of being immediately sacrificed to his just resentment, he threw himself on his knees; and confessing each transaction, implored his life, in pity to the natural desire of self-preservation, which had, alone precipitated him to so ungrateful a proceeding. "Oh!" added he, "I have given myself to danger, upon your account! Even for your ultimate advantage, did I bring on my head, the perils which now fill me with dismay! Love alone for you, made me hasten the execution of William Wallace, that insidious friend, who would have crept into your throne.—And then, fear of your mistaking the motives of so good a service,

betrayed me to throw myself into the arms of Edward!"

"Bury thyself, and crimes, thou foulest traitor, deep in the depths of hell!" cried the prince, starting away with a tremendous gesture. "Out of my sight for ever—that I may not pollute these hands with thy monstrous blood!" Till this moment, Bruce was ignorant that Badenoch had been an instigator in the murder of Wallace; and forgetting all his own personal wrongs, in this more mighty injury, with tumultuous horror in his soul, he turned from the coward to avoid the self-blame of stabbing an unarmed wretch at his feet. But at that moment, Cummin, who believed his doom only suspended, rose from his knee and drawing his dirk from under his plaid, struck it into the back of the prince. Bruce turned on him with the quickness of thought, "Hah!" exclaimed he, seizing him by the throat, "then take thy fate! This accursed deed, has removed the only bar-

rier between vengeance and thee,—and thus, remember William Wallace!"—As the prince spoke, he plunged his dagger into the breast of the traitor. Cummin uttered a fearful cry, and rolled down at his feet, murmuring imprecations.

Bruce fled from a scene of such horror. It was the first time his arm had drawn blood but in the field of battle, and he felt as if the base tide had contaminated his hand. In the cloisters, he was encountered by his friends. A few words informed them of what had happened.—"Is he dead?" inquired Kirkpatrick. "I can hardly doubt it," answered Bruce.—"Such a matter," returned the veteran, "must not be left to conjecture. I will secure (*) him!" And running forward, followed by Lindsay, he found the wounded Regent crawling from the door of the cell; and throwing himself upon him, without noise, stabbed him to the heart.

Before the catastrophe was known in

the convent, Bruce and his friends had left it, and were far on their road to Lochmaben. He arrived before sunrise; and once more inmate of his paternal castle, thence dispatched Fleming to Lord Ruthven, with a transcript of his designs.

In the same packet he inclosed a letter for the Lady Isabella. It contained this brave resolution, That, in his present return to Scotland, he did not consider himself merely as Robert Bruce, come to reclaim the throne of his ancestors, but as the executor of the last and dying will of Sir William Wallace, which was, *that Bruce should confirm the liberty of Scotland, or fall as Wallace had done, invincible at his post.*—"Till that freedom is accomplished," continued the virtuous prince, "I will never shake the steadfast purpose of my soul, by even one glance at thy life-endearing beauties. I am Wallace's soldier, Isabella, as he was Heaven's! and while my captain looks on me from above, shall I not approve myself worthy

his example?—I woo'd you as a knight, I will win you as a king: and on the day when no hostile Southron breathes in Scotland, I will demand my sweetest reward, my beloved bride, of her noble uncle. You shall come to me as the angel of peace; and in one hour, we will receive the nuptial benediction, and the vows of our people!"

The purport of the prince's letter to Ruthven, was well adapted to the strain of the foregoing. He there announced his intention of proceeding immediately to the plain of Stirling; and there putting himself at the head of his loyal Scots, declare himself their lawful sovereign, and proclaim to the world, that he acknowledged no legal superior but the Great Being whose vicegerent he was. From that centre of his kingdom, he would make excursions to its farthest extremities; and with God's will, either drive his enemies from the country, or perish with the sword in his hand, as became

the descendant of William the Lion, as became the friend of William Wallace!"

Ruthven lay encamped on the carse of Gowrie, when this letter was delivered to him. He read it aloud to his assembled chieftains, and with waving bonnets, they hailed the approach of their valiant prince. Bothwell alone, whose soul-devoted attachment to Wallace could not be superseded by any other affection, allowed his bonnet to remain inactive in his hand; but, with the fervour of true loyalty, he thanked God for thus bringing the sovereign, whom his friend loved, to bind in one the contending interests of his country; to wrest from the hands of that friend's assassin, the sceptre, for which he had dyed them so deep in blood.

CHAP. XXI.

THE word of Bruce was as irreversible as his spirit was determined. No temptation of indulgence, could seduce him from the one; no mischance of adversity, could subdue the other. The standard of liberty had been raised by him, amidst his faithful chieftains, on the carse of Gowrie; and he carried it in his victorious arm, from east to west; from the most northern point of Sutherland, to the walls of Stirling: but there, the garrison, which the treason of the late Regent had admitted into the citadel, gave a momentary check to his career. The English governor refused to surrender on the terms proposed; and while his first flag of truce was yet in the tent of the Scottish monarch, a second arrived to break

off the negociation. Whatever were the reasons for this abrupt determination, Bruce paid him not the compliment of asking a *wherefore?* but advancing his troops to the Southron outposts, drove them in with great loss; and approaching the lower works of the town, by the road of Ballochgeich, so alarmed the governor as to induce him to send forth several squadrons of horse to stop his progress.—Vain was the attempt. They shrank before the resolute prince and his determined followers. The governor dispatched others; and at last marched out himself, at the head of a chosen band of infantry, to their support. No force seemed able to withstand the pressing valour of the Scots. The Southron saw himself in the midst of his slain, and deserted by half of his surviving troops. A surrender, both of himself and his fainting companions, was now his only resource. His herald sounded a parley. The generous victor, in the midst of triumph,

listened to the offered capitulation. It was not to include that of Stirling.

Bruce stopped the herald at this clause, and at once demanded the unconditional surrender of both the citadel and town. The governor, being aware that in his present state there was no alternative, and knowing the noble nature of the prince who made the requisition, yielded to necessity, and resigned the whole into his hands.

Next morning, Bruce entered as a conqueror, with the whole of his kingdom at his feet: for, from the Solway frith to the northern ocean, no Scottish town nor castle owned a foreign master. The acclamations of a rescued people rent the skies; and while prayers and blessings poured on him from above, below, and around, he did indeed feel himself a king, and that he had returned to the land of his forefathers. While he stood on his proud war-horse in front of the great gates of the citadel, now thrown wide asunder to ad-

mit its rightful sovereign, his noble prisoners came forward. They bent their knees before him, and delivering their swords, received in return his gracious assurance of mercy. At this moment all Scottish hearts and wishes seemed rivetted on their youthful monarch. Dismounting from his steed with a grace that took captive even the souls of his enemies, he raised his helmet from his head, as the bishop of Dunkeld, followed by all the ecclesiastics in the town, appeared, to wait upon the triumph of his king.

The beautiful anthem of the virgins of Israel on the conquests of David, was chanted forth by the nuns who, in this heaven-hallowed hour, like the spirits of the blest, revisited the world to give the chosen of their land, *All hail.*

The words, the scene, smote the heart of Bothwell; he turned aside and wept. Where were now the buoyant feelings with which he had followed the similar triumph of Wallace into these gates?

"Buried, thou martyred hero, in thy bloody grave!" New men and new services seemed to have worn out remembrance of the past; but in the memories, of even this joyous crowd, Wallace lived, though like a bright light which had passed through their path, and was gone, never more to return.

Bruce, on entering the citadel, was told by Mowbray the English governor, that he would find a lady there, who was in a frightful state of mental derangement. A question or two from the victorious monarch informed him that this was the Countess of Strathearn. On the revolted abthanes having betrayed Wallace and his country to England, the joy and ambition of the Countess knew no bounds; and hoping, in the end, to persuade Edward to adjudge to her the crown, she made it apparent to the English king, how useful would be her services in Scotland; and with a plenary, though secret mission, she took her course through her

native land, to discover who were inimical to the foreign interest, and who likely to promote her own: and after this circuit, fixing her court at Stirling, she lived there in regal magnificence, and exercised the functions of a vice-queen. At this period arrived intelligence which, Mowbray thought, would fill her with exultation; and hastening to declare it, he told her that the King of England's authority was now firmly established in Scotland, for that on the twenty-third of August, Sir William Wallace had been executed, according to all the forms of law, upon the Tower-hill.

At the first declaration of this event, she fell senseless on the floor. It was not until the next morning that she recovered to perfect animation, and then her ravings were horrible and violent. She accused herself of the murder of Sir William Wallace. She seemed to hear him upbraid her with his fate; and her shrieks, and tremendous ejaculations, so fearfully pre-

sented the scene of his death before the eyes of her attendants, that the women fled; and none other of that sex would afterwards venture to approach her. In these fearful moments, the dreadful confession of all her premeditated guilt; of her infuriate and disappointed passion for Wallace, and her vowed revenge; were revealed under circumstances so shocking, that Mowbray declared to the King of Scots, as he conducted him towards her apartment, that he would rather wear out his life in a rayless dungeon, than endure one hour of her agonies.

There was a dead silence in her chamber as they approached the door. Mowbray cautiously opened it, and discovered the object of their visit. She was seated at the farther end of the room, on the floor, envelopped in a mass of scarlet velvet, which she had drawn off her bed: her hands clasped her knees; and she bent forward, with her eyes fixed on the door at which they entered. Her once

dazzling beauty, was now transformed to the terrible lightning which gleamed on the face of Satan when he sat brooding on the burning marl of Tartarus.

She remained motionless as they advanced. But when Bruce stopped directly before her, contemplating, with horror, the woman whom he regarded as one of the murderers of his most beloved friend, she sprang at once upon him, and clinging to him with shrieks, buried her head in his bosom, and exclaimed—" Save me! —Mar drags me down to hell; I burn there, and yet I die not!"—then bursting from Bruce with an imprecation that froze his blood, she flew to the other side of the chamber, crying aloud, " He tore out my heart!—Fiend, I took thee for Wallace—but I murdered him!" Her agonies, her shrieks, and her attempts at self-violence, were now so dreadful, that Bruce, raising her, bleeding, from the hearth on which she had furiously dashed her head, put her into the arms of the

men who attended her; and then with an awful sense of divine retribution, left the apartment.

CHAP. XXII.

THE generality of his prisoners, Bruce directed should be kept safe in the citadel; but to Mowbray he gave his liberty, and ordered every means to facilitate the commodious journey of that brave knight, whom he had requested to convey the insane Lady Strathearn to the protection of her husband.

Mowbray accepted his freedom with gratitude, and gladly set forth with his unhappy charge, to meet his sovereign. Hope of Edward's approach, had been the reason of his withdrawing his herald

from the camp of Bruce; and the King had not arrived time enough to save Stirling, Mowbray did not doubt that he was still pursuing his promised march. This anticipation, the Southron's loyalty would not allow him to impart to Bruce; and he bade that generous prince adieu, with the full belief of soon returning to find him the vanquished of Edward.

At the decline of day, Bruce returned to his camp, to pass the night in the field with his soldiers, intending, next morning to give his last orders to the detachments which he meant to send, under the command of Lennox and Douglas, to disperse themselves over the border counties, and there keep station till that peace should be signed by England, which, he was determined, by unabated hostilities to compel.

Having taken these measures for the security of his kingdom and the establishment of his own happiness, he had just returned to his tent on the banks of Ban-

nockburn, when Grimsby, his now faithful attendant, conducted an armed knight into his presence. The light of the lamp which stood on the table, streaming full on the face of the stranger, discovered to the King his English friend the intrepid Montgomery. Bruce, with an exclamation of glad surprise would have clasped him in his arms, but Montgomery dropping on his knee, exclaimed, "Receive a subject, as well as a friend, victorious and virtuous prince!—I have forsworn the vassalage of the Plantagenets; and thus, without title or land, with only a faithful heart, Gilbert Hambledon comes to vow himself yours and Scotland's for ever."

Bruce raised him from the ground; and welcoming him with the warm embrace of friendship; inquired the cause of so extraordinary an abjuration of his legal sovereign. "No light matter," observed the King, "could have so wrought upon my noble Montgomery!"—"Montgomery, no more!" replied the earl with

indignant eagerness: "When I threw the insignia of my earldom at the feet of the unjust Edward, I told him, that I would lay the saw to the root of the nobility I had derived from his house, and cut it *through*; and that I would sooner leave my posterity without titles and without wealth, than deprive them of real honour. I have done as I said!—And yet I come not without a treasure; for the sacred corse of William Wallace is now in my barque, floating on the waves of the Forth!"

The subjugation of England, would hardly have been so welcome to Bruce as this intelligence. He received it with an eloquent, though unutterable look of gratitude. Hambledon continued; "On the tyrant summoning the peers of England to follow him to the destruction of Scotland, Gloucester refused under a plea of illness, and I could not but shew a disinclination to obey. This occasioned some remarks from Edward, respecting my

want of allegiance, and known attachment to the Scottish cause, which drew from me the answer,—That my heart would not, for the wealth of the world, permit me to join him in the projected invasion, since I had seen the spot in my own country, where, actuated by a most unkingly jealousy, he had cut down the flower of all knighthood, because he was a Scot, and would not sell his birth-right! —The King left me in wrath, and threatened, to make me recant my words:—I as proudly declared I would maintain them. Next morning, being in waiting on the prince, I entered his chamber and found John Le de Spencer, (the coward who had so basely insulted Wallace on the day of his condemnation;) sitting with his highness. On my offering the services due from my office, this worthless minion turned on me, and accused me in the most insolent language of rejoicing in the King's disappointment, at your escape and success. He taxed me

with having declined joining the army, for the sole purpose of executing some plot in London, devised between me and my Scottish partizans, for the subversion of the English monarchy. I denied the charge. He enforced it with oaths and new allegations. The prince furiously gave me the lie, and commanded me as a traitor, to leave his presence. I refused to stir an inch till I had made the base heart of Le de Spencer retract his falsehood. The coward took courage at his master's passion, and drawing his sword upon me, in language, that would blister my tongue to repeat, threatened to compel my departure; and as a first motion, he struck me on the face with his weapon. The arms of his prince could not then save him; I thrust him through the body, and he fell. Edward ran on me with his dagger, but I wrested it from him: then it was that, in reply to his menaces, I revoked my fealty to a sovereign I abhorred, and a prince I despised.

Leaving the presence before the fluctuations of his versatile mind could fix upon seizing me, I hastened to Highgate, and conveyed away the body of our friend from its sanctuary. The same night, I embarked it and myself on board a ship of my own; and am now at your feet, brave and just King, no longer Montgomery, but a true Scot in heart and loyalty!"

"And as a brother, generous Hambledon!" returned Bruce, "I receive, and will portion thee. My paternal lands of Cadzow on the Clyde, shall be thine for ever. And may thy posterity be as worthy of the inheritance, as their ancestor is of all my love and confidence!"(7)

Hambledon having received his new sovereign's directions concerning the disembarkation of those sacred remains, which the young King declared he should welcome as the pledge of Heaven to bless his victories with peace; returned to the haven, where Wallace rested in that sleep

which even the voice of friendship could not disturb.

At the hour of the midnight watch, the trumpets of approaching heralds resounded without the camp.—Bruce hastened to the council-tent to receive, the now anticipated tidings. The communications of Hambledon, had given him reason to expect another struggle for his kingdom; and the message of the trumpets, declared it should be a mortal one.

Edward, at the head of a hundred thousand men, having forced a rapid passage through the lowlands, was within a few hours march of Stirling, with a full determination to bury Scotland under her own slain, or to restore her, by one decisive blow, to his sole empire.

When this was uttered by the English herald, Bruce turned to Ruthven with an heroic smile; "Let him come, my brave barons! and he shall find that Bannockburn shall page with Cambus-Kenneth!"

The strength of the Scottish army did

not amount to more than thirty thousand men, against this host of southrons.— But the corse of Wallace, was there! His spirit, glowed in the heart of Bruce.—The young monarch lost not the advantage of chusing his ground first; and therefore, as his power was deficient in cavalry, he so took his field as to compel the enemy, who must act on the offensive, to make it a battle of infantry alone.

To protect his exposed flank from the innumerable squadrons of Edward, he dug deep and wide pits near to Bannockburn; and having overlaid their mouths with turf and brushwood, proceeded to marshal his little phalanx on the shore of that brook, till his front stretched to St. Ninian's monastery.

The centre was led by Lord Ruthven and Walter Stewart; the right, owned the valiant leading of Douglas and Ramsay; and the left, was put in charge of Lennox, with Sir Thomas Randolph as his second, a brave chieftain who, like

Lindsay and others, had lately returned from a distant land, and now zealously embraced the cause of his country.

Bruce stationed himself at the head of the reserve; and with him were the veterans Loch-awe and Kirkpatrick, and Lord Bothwell with the true De Longueville, and the brave Lanerkers of Wallace; all determined to make this division the stay of their little army, or the last sacrifice for Scottish liberty, and its martyred champion's corse. There, stood the sable hearse of Wallace; and the royal standard, struck deep into a stone which grew out of the ground, waved its blood-red volumes over his sacred head.

"By that Heaven-sent palladium of our freedom," cried Bruce, pointing to the bier, "we must, this day, stand or fall. —He who deserts it, murders William Wallace anew!"

At this appeal, the heads of each battalion assembled around the hallowed spot, and laying their hands on the pall,

swore to fill up one grave with their dauntless Wallace, rather than, alive, yield the ground which he had rendered doubly precious by having made it the scene and the guerdon of his invincible deeds. The moment Kirkpatrick approached the side of his dead chief, he burst into tears, and his sobs alone proclaimed his participation in the solemnity. —The vow spread to the surrounding legions; and was echoed, with mingled cries and acclamations, from the farthest ranks.

"My leader, in death as in life!" exclaimed Bruce, clasping his friend's sable shroud to his heart; "thy pale corse shall again redeem the country, which cast thee, living, amongst devouring lions! Its presence shall fight, and conquer, for thy friend and King!"

Before the chiefs turned to resume their martial stations, the abbot of Inchaffray drew near with the mysterious iron box, which Douglas had caused to be brought

from St. Fillan's priory. On presenting it to the young monarch, he repeated the prohibition which had been given with it, and added, "Since then, these canonized relics (for none can doubt they are so,) have found protection under the no less holy arm of St. Fillan; he now delivers them to your youthful majesty to penetrate their secrets, and to nerve your mind with a redoubled trust in the saintly host."

"The saints are to be honoured, reverend father; and on that principle I shall not invade their mysteries, till the God in whom alone I trust, marks me with more than the name of king; till he establishes me by victory, the approved champion of my country, the worthy successor of him, before whose mortal body, and immortal spirit, I now emulate his deeds. But as a memorial that the host of heaven do indeed lean from their bright abodes to wish well to this day, let these holy relics repose with those of the brave, till the issue of the battle."

Bruce having placed his array, disposed the supernumeraries of his army, the families of his soldiers and other apparently useless followers of the camp, under shelter of a hill which would lie between them and the enemy.

By day-break, the whole of the Southron army appeared in sight. The van, consisting of archers and men at arms, displayed the banner of Earl de Warenne; the main body was led on by Edward himself, supported by a train of his most redoubted generals. As they approached, the bishop of Dunkeld stood on the face of the opposite hill, between the abbots of Cambus-Kenneth and Inchaffray, celebrating mass in the sight of the opposing armies. He passed along, in front of the Scottish lines barefoot, with the crucifix in his hand, and, in few, but forceful words, exhorted them, by every sacred hope, to fight with an unreceding step for their rights, their King, and the corse of William Wallace! At this adjuration,

which seemed the call of Heaven itself, the Scots fell on their knees to confirm their resolution with a vow. The sudden humiliation of their posture excited an instant triumph in the haughty mind of Edward, and spurring forward, he shouted aloud, "They yield! They cry for mercy!" "They cry for mercy!" returned Percy, trying to withhold his Majesty, "but not from us. On that ground, on which they kneel, they will be victorious, or find their graves!"

The King, contemning this opinion of the earl, and inwardly believing that now Wallace was dead he need fear no other opponent, (for he knew not that even his cold remains rose in array against him;) ordered his men to charge. The horsemen, to the number of thirty thousand, obeyed; and rushing forward, with the hope of overwhelming the Scots ere they could arise from their knees, met a different destiny. They found destruction amid the trenches, and on the spikes in the

way; and with broken ranks, and fearful confusion, fell, or fled under the missive weapons which poured on them from the adjoining hill. De Valence was over-thrown and severely wounded; and being carried off the field, filled the rear ranks with dismay,—while the King's division was struck with consternation at so disastrous a commencement of an action, in which they had promised themselves so easy a victory; Bruce, who felt his little army much distressed by the arrows of the English, sent Bothwell round, with a resolute body of men, to attack the archers on the height they had seized. This was effected; and Bruce coming up with his reserve, to fill the deficiencies which this artillery had made in his foremost ranks, the battle in the centre became close, obstinate, and decisive. Many fell before the determined arm of the youthful king; but it was the fortune of Bothwell to encounter the false Monteith in the train of Edward. The Scottish earl

was then at the head of the intrepid Lanerkers: "Fiend, of the most damned treason!" cried he, "vengeance is come!" and with an iron grasp throwing him into the midst of the Lanerkers; they dragged him to the hearse of their chief, and there, on the skirts of its pall, the wretched traitor breathed out his treacherous breath under the strokes of a hundred swords. "So," cried the veteran, Ireland, "perish the murderers of William Wallace!" "So," shouted the rest, "perish the enemies of the bravest of men!"

At this crisis, the women, and the followers of the Scottish camp, hearing such an exclamation from their friends, not doubting it was victory, impatiently quitted their station behind the hill, and appeared on the summit waving their scarfs and plaids, which they exultingly mounted on their staffs, and re-echoed with loud huzzas the shouts they had heard from below. The English, mistaking these people for a new army, had not the power to

recover from the increasing confusion which had seized them on King Edward himself receiving a wound; and panic-struck with the sight of their generals falling around them, they flung down their arms and fled. The King narrowly escaped; but being mounted on a stout and fleet horse, he put him to the speed, till he reached Dunbar. The young Earl of March, being as much attached to the cause of England as his father was, instantly gave him a passage to England.

The Southron camp with all its riches, fell into the hands of Bruce. And while his chieftains pursued their gallant chase, he turned his steps from warlike triumph, to pay the last honours to the remains of the hero whose blood had so often bathed the field of victory. So long had been the conflict, that night closed in before the last squadrons left the banks of Bannockburn.

With the earliest beams of morn, Bruce appeared on the field, with his helmet

royally plumed, and the golden lion of Scotland gleaming from under his sable surcoat.—Bothwell rode at his side. The troops he had retained from the pursuit, were drawn out in array. In a brief address he unfolded to them the solemn duty to which he had called them; to see the bosom of their native land receive, and for ever, the body of Sir William Wallace. —"He gave to you your homes and your liberty; yield then, at last a grave, the peace of the tomb, to him whom some amongst you repaid with treachery and death!"

At these words, a cry, as if they beheld their betrayed chieftain slain before them, issued from every heart.

The news had spread to the town; and with tears and lamentations a vast crowd collected round the royal troop.—Bruce, ordered his bards to raise the sad coronach; and the march, towards the tent which canopied the sacred remains, to begin. The whole train followed in speech-

less woe, as if each individual had lost his dearest relative. Having passed the wood, they came in view of the black hearse, which covered all that now remained of him who had so lately crossed these precints in all the panoply of triumphant war; in all the graciousness of peace and love to man!—At the sight, the soldiers, the people, rushed forward, and precipitating themselves before the bier, on their knees implored a pardon for their ungrateful country. They adjured him, by every tender name of father, benefactor, and friend; and in such a sacred presence, forgetting that their King was by, gave way to a grief, which most eloquently told the young monarch, that he who would be respected after William Wallace, must, not only possess his power and valour, but imitate his virtues.

Scrymgeour, who had well remembered the desire Wallace had expressed on the battlements of Dumbarton, with a holy reference to his vow, now laid the standard

of Scotland upon the pall. Hambledon sanctified this martial shroud, by placing on it the sword and helmet of the sacrificed hero. Bruce observed all in silence, and uncovering his royal head, with his kingly purple sweeping in the dust, walked before the bier, shedding tears, more precious in the eyes of his subjects, than the oil which was soon to pour upon his brow. It was, as he thus moved on, the mourner of all mortal excellence, that he heard acclamations mingle with the voice of sorrow. "This is our King, worthy to have been the friend of Wallace! worthy to succeed him in the kingdom of our hearts!"

At the gates of Cambus-Kenneth, the venerable abbot, whom Wallace's valiant arm had placed there, appeared at the head of his religious brethren; and without uttering the grief that shook his aged frame, he raised the golden crucifix over the head of the bier; and after leaning his face for a few minutes on it, preceded

the procession into the church. None but the soldiers entered. The people remained without; and, as the doors closed, they fell on the pavement, weeping as if the living Wallace had again been torn from them.

On the steps of the altar the bier rested. The bishop of Dunkeld in his pontifical robes, received the sacred deposit with a cloud of incense; and the pealing organ, answered by the voices of the choristers, breathed forth the solemn requiem of the dead. The wreathing frankincense parted its vapour, and a wan but beautiful form, clad in a nun's vestments, and clasping an urn to her breast, appeared, stretched on a litter, and borne by two monks towards the spot.—It was Helen, brought from the adjoining nunnery, where, since her return to these once dear shores, now made a desert to her, she had languished in the gradual decay of the fragile bonds which alone fettered her mourning spirit, eager for release.

All night, had Isabella watched by her couch, expecting that each succeeding breath would be the last her beloved sister would draw in this calamitous world; but, as her tears fell in silence from her cheek, upon the cold forehead of Helen, the gentle saint understood their expression, and looking up; "My Isabella," said she, "fear not.—My Wallace is returned.—God will grant me life to clasp his blessed remains!"

Full of this hope, she was borne, almost a passing spirit, into the chancel of Cambus-Kenneth.—Her veil was open, and discovered the face of one as just awakened from the dead: it was ashy pale; but it bore a celestial brightness, which, like the silver lustre of the moon, declared its approach to the fountain of its glory. Her eye fell on the bier: and with a momentary strength, she sprang from the couch, on which she had leaned in dying feebleness, and rushing towards it, threw herself upon the coffin.

There was an awful pause while Helen seemed to weep. But so, was not her sorrow to be shed. It was locked within the flood-gates of her heart.

In that suspension of the soul, when Bothwell knelt on one side of the bier, and Ruthven bent his knee on the other, Bruce stretched out his hand to the weeping Isabella; "Come hither, my youthful bride, and let thy first duty be paid to the shrine of thy benefactor and mine!—So may we live, sweet excellence, and so may we die, if the like may be our meed of heavenly glory!" Isabella threw herself into his arms and wept aloud. Helen, slowly raising her head at these words, regarded her sister with a look of awful tenderness; and, then, turning her eyes back upon the coffin, gazed on it as if they would have pierced its confines, and she clasping the urn suddenly to her heart, exclaimed, "*Thy bridal bed shall be William Wallace's grave!*"

Bruce and Isabella, not aware that she

repeated words which Wallace had said to her, believing, she addressed them, turned to her with portentous emotion. She understood the terrified glance of her sister; and with a smile, which spoke her kindred to the soul, her's was panting to join, she answered, "I speak of my own espousals. But ere that moment comes, and I feel it near—let my Wallace's hallowed presence bless your nuptials!—Thou wilt breathe thy benediction through my lips?" added she, laying her hand on the coffin, and looking down on it as if she were conversing with its inhabitant.

"O! no, no;" returned Isabella, throwing herself on her knees before the almost unembodied aspect of her sister: "Let me ever be the sharer of your cell, or, take me with you to the kingdom of heaven!"

"It is thy sister's spirit that speaks;" cried Dunkeld, observing the awe, which not only shook the tender frame of Isa-

bella, but had communicated itself to Bruce, who stood in heart-struck veneration before the yet un-ascended angel; "holy inspiration," continued the bishop, "beams from her eyes, and as ye hope for farther blessings, obey its dictates!"

Isabella bowed her head in acquiescence. Bruce, as he approached to take his part in the sacred rite, raised the hand which lay on the pall to his lips. The ceremony began; was finished!—As the bridal notes resounded from the organ, and the royal pair rose from their knees, Helen, held her trembling hands over them.—She gasped for breath, and would have sunk down without a word, but Bothwell, who stood near, supported her shadowy form upon his breast:—she looked round on him with a grateful, though languid smile, and with a strong effort spoke:—"Be you blest in all things, as Wallace would have blessed you!—From his side, I pour out my soul upon you, my sister—my brother!—and with

its inward breathed prayers to the Giver of all Good for your eternal happiness, I turn to my long-looked for rest!"

Bruce and Isabella, wept in each other's arms. Helen threw herself, from the bosom of Bothwell, prostrate on the coffin; and exclaiming in a low tone, "I waited only for this!—We have met—I unite thy noble heart to thee again—and I claim thy promise—at our Father's hands."—Her voice gradually faded away as she uttered these broken sentences, which none but the close and attentive ear of Bothwell heard.—But he caught not the triumphant exclamation of her soul, which spoke, though her lips ceased to move, and cried to the attending angels—"Death, where is thy sting? Grave, where is thy victory?"

In this awful moment, the abbot of Inchaffray, believing the dying saint of Cambus-Kenneth was prostrate in prayer, laid his hand on the *iron box*, which stood at the foot of Wallace's bier—"Before

the sacred remains of the once champion of Scotland,(z) and in the presence of his royal successor," exclaimed the abbot, "let this mysterious coffer of St. Fillan's be opened, to reward the deliverer of Scotland according to its intent!" "If it were to contain the relics of St. Fillan himself," returned the King, "they could not meet a holier bosom than this!" and resting the box on the coffin, he unclasped the lock; and the *Regalia of Scotland* was discovered! At this sight Bruce exclaimed in an agony of grateful emotion, "Thus did this truest of human beings protect my rights, even while the people I had deserted, and whom he had saved, knelt to him to wear them all!"

"And thus Wallace crowns thee!" said Dunkeld, taking the diadem from its coffer, and setting it on his head.

"My husband, and my King!" gently exclaimed Isabella, sinking on her knee before him, and clasping his hand to her lips.

"Hearest thou that? my sweet cousin, Helen!" cried Bothwell, touching the clasped hands which rested on the coffin. He turned pale, and looked on Bruce. Bruce, in the glad moment of his joy at this happy consummation of so many years of blood, observed not his glance, but in exulting accents, exclaimed, "Look up, my sister; and let thy soul, discoursing with our Wallace, tell him that Scotland is free, and Bruce a king!"

She spoke not, she moved not. Bothwell raised her clay-cold face. "That soul is fled, my lord!" said he; "but from yon eternal sphere they now together look upon your joys. Here let their bodies rest; for *they loved in their lives, and in their deaths they shall not be divided!*"

BEFORE the renewing of the moon, whose waning light witnessed these solemn obse-

quies, the aim of Wallace's life, the object of Helen's prayers, was accomplished.—Peace reigned in Scotland.—The discomfited King Edward died of chagrin at Carlisle; and his humbled son and successor sent to offer such honourable terms of pacification, that Bruce gave them acceptance; and a lasting tranquillity spread prosperity and happiness throughout the land.

THE END.

NOTES

TO THE FIFTH VOLUME OF

THE SCOTTISH CHIEFS.

([a] p. 16.) Sir Alexander Ramsay, who used to be called *the Flower of Courtliness*, is celebrated in history, as a brave follower of Wallace; and these caves, which are still visited with veneration by every true Scot, are the scenes of many a legend respecting the prowess of Ramsay, when he issued from their green recesses, to assist in the downfal of his country's enemies.

([b] p. 17.) The Red Cummin was an attributive appellation of John, the last Regent before the accession of Bruce. His father, the princely Earl of Badenoch was called the Black Cummin, (and from that circumstance I have so sirnamed James, who, in these volumes, is made the predecessor of John in the

regency) but why they received these epithets I cannot find any good account. Some say it was owing to the colour of their hair. Probably it might be from a difference in their banners. One, bearing the sheaves of Cummin, sable, and the other, gules, would be sufficient to mark them by these names.

([c] p. 25.) The particulars of this battle are not exaggerated, and most of them may be found elaborately described in Holinshed.

([d] p. 67.) Abthanes, were the greater barons, or chiefs in Scotland, who held a sort of legislative power over the minor orders.

([e] p. 134.) The marriage of the Countess of Strathearn with Earl de Warenne, and her consequent disloyalty to Scotland, is related by several historians..

([f] p. 141.) The "Lochiel" of Mr. Thomas Campbell flitted before my eyes, as I ventured to shadow forth this scene.

([g] p. 164.) This saying of the venerable teacher of Wallace is recorded. It means, "Know of a certainty that virtue, the best of things, never can exist under the band of servility!"

([h] p. 172.) This speech is almost literal from history.

([i] p. 178.) It is said that this Ker was the ancestor of the Kers of Kersland. His dying in defence of Wallace is not a fiction.

([k] p. 181.) Since this period, *tibi soli* is one of the mottoes borne by the House of Ruthven.

([l] p. 204.) The parallel scene to this in the interesting Lay of Blind Harrie, is one of the finest in the poem.

([m] p. 209.) On the banks of the Clyde, near Lanerk, such a tower is still seen, and bears the name of Wallace.

([n] p. 229.) The events of Wallace having dictated terms of peace with England, and Monteith pledging himself to that country's emissary, having taken place in this church, are traditionary facts.

([o] p. 238.) These words of lamentation are recorded as having been pronounced by Wallace. Lumloch, the spot where this horrible treason was acted, has since been called Robroyston, from having, in after times, been the residence of Rob Roy the famous free-

booter. The hovel is yet standing, and a beam of wood preserved, as that with which Wallace defended himself, and his faithful friend.

([p] p. 247.) Spottiswood insists very much on this prediction of Ercildown's, which was verified in James, in the ninth degree from Bruce.

([q] p. 257.) The words of such a sentence are too horrid to be registered here. I read them, (when it was in the possession of the late Sir Frederick Eden,) in the original death-warrant of the Duke of Norfolk, signed by Queen Elizabeth; and their sanguinary import would be too dreadful for humanity to credit their execution, did we not know that it has been done.

([r] p. 258.) In the tradition of this circumstance, it is said, that in scorn they *crowned* him with a wreath of laurel; but, for obvious reasons, I have a little changed the narrative.

([s] p. 282.) This bequest of Wallace is related as a fact.

([t] p. 315.) This sentiment with regard to the Scottish hero, is given in Speed's History.

([u] p. 335.) In the relation of this incident, Buchanan names Montgomery as the friend who apprized Bruce of his danger. Holinshed attributes it to Gloucester. I have paid due deference to both authorities.

([x] p. 350.) In memory of this circumstance, the crest of the family of Kirkpatrick is a hand grasping a dagger distilling gouts of blood; the motto, "I mak sicker."

([y] p. 368.) These circumstances relating to the first establishment of the noble family of Hamilton (in old historians called Hampton or Hameldon) in Scotland, are particularly recorded. The lands of Cadzow are now called Hamilton, from their owners; and on them is the splendid mansion of the duke of that name.

([z] p. 388.) The extraordinary bodily, as well as mental superiority which Bruce and Wallace possessed over their contemporaries, is thus most interestingly recorded by Hector Boetius.

"About the latter end of the year 1430, King James I. on returning to Perth from St. Andrews, found his curiosity excited to visit a very old lady of the house of Erskine, who resided in the castle of Kin-

noul. In consequence of her extreme old age she had lost her sight, but all her other senses were entire, and her body was yet firm and lively. She had seen William Wallace and Robert Bruce, and frequently told particulars of them. The King, who entertained a love and veneration of great men, resolved to visit the old lady, that he might hear her describe the manners and strength of the two heroes. He therefore sent a message, acquainting her that he would come to her the next day. When she was told that the King was approaching, she went down into the hall of her castle, attended by a train of matrons, many of whom were her own descendants. She advanced to meet his Majesty so easily and gracefully that he doubted her being wholly blind. At his desire she embraced and kissed him. He took her by the hand, and made her sit down on the seat next him; and then, in a long conference he interrogated her on ancient matters. Among other things he asked her to tell him what sort of a man William Wallace was. What was his personal figure; what his courage; and with what degree of strength he was endowed. He put the same questions to her concerning Robert Bruce. *Robert*, said she, *was a man, beautiful, and of a fine appearance. His strength was so great that he could easily have overcome any mortal man of his time. But in so far as he excelled other men, he was excelled by*

Wallace, both in stature and in bodily strength: for, in wrestling, Wallace could have overthrown two such men as Robert.

The stone, in which the standard of Bruce in the battle of Bannockburn was fixed, is still visible; and every narrator of the legends connected with that memorable field of victory, will relate the superstitious sanctity attributed to the iron box, brought from St. Fillan's.

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